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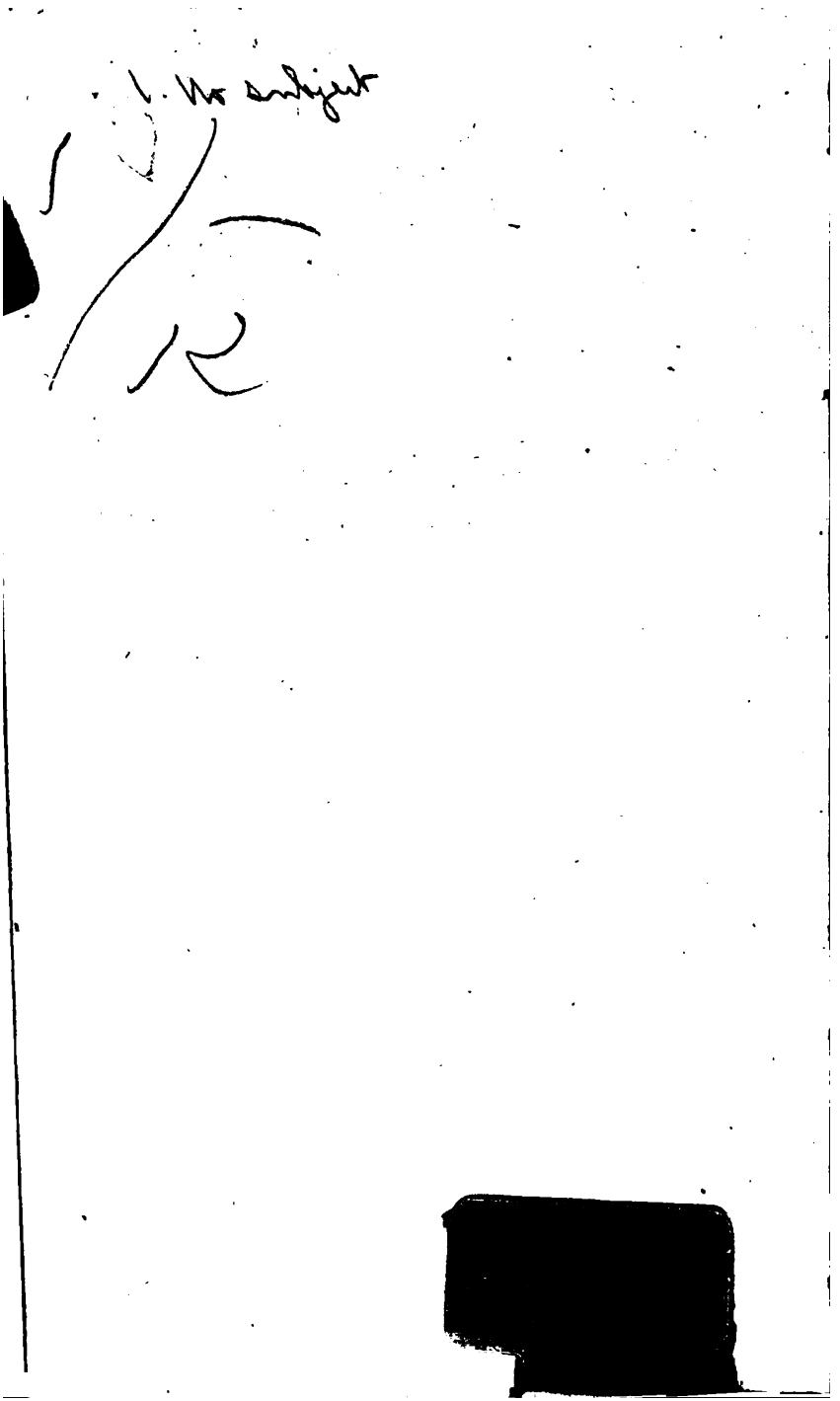

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Bulwer-Lytton

GODOLPHIN.

BY

SIR E. L. BULWER, BART., M.P., M.A.

"Sleep,
Voluptuous Cæsar, and security
Seize on thy powers!"—BEN JONSON—*Fall of Sejanus.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW-YORK:
PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS,
NO. 82 CLIFF-STREET.

1840.

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TO

COUNT ALFRED D'ORSAY.

My dear Count d'Orsay,

When the parentage of Godolphin was still unconfessed and unknown, you were pleased to encourage his first struggles with the world: now, will you permit the father he has just discovered to reintroduce him to your notice? I am sorry to say, however, that my unfilial offspring, having been so long disowned, is not sufficiently grateful for being acknowledged at last: he says that he belongs to a very numerous family, and, wishing to be distinguished from his brothers, desires not only to reclaim your acquaintance, but to borrow your name. Nothing less will content his ambition than the most public opportunity in his power of parading his obligations to the most accomplished gentleman of our time. Will you, then, allow him to make his new appearance in the world under your wing, and thus suffer the son, as well as the father, to attest the kindness of your heart, and to boast the honour of your friendship?

Believe me, my dear Count d'Orsay,
With the sincerest regard,
Yours very faithfully and truly,
E. L. B.

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NOTE

TO THE

PRESENT EDITION.—1840.

This Novel ranks in the class of my earlier compositions, and has, in addition to its other defects, those that might naturally result from the youth of the Author. A few passages in the former edition, which appeared to me blemishes that would bear removal without injury to the general construction, have been omitted in the present; and some corrections and additions made, tending, let me hope, to improve the details of the narrative, and to render more minute the delineation of the characters.

London, April 17, 1840.

GODOLPHIN.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEATH-BED OF JOHN VERNON.—HIS DYING WORDS.—DESCRIPTION OF HIS DAUGHTER, THE HEROINE.—THE OATH.

"Is the night calm, Constance?"

"Beautiful! the moon is up."

"Open the shutters wider—there. It *is* a beautiful night. How beautiful! Come hither, my child."

The rich moonlight that now shone through the windows streamed on little that it could invest with poetical attraction. The room was small, though not squalid in its character and appliances. The bed-curtains, of a dull chints, were drawn back, and showed the form of a man, past middle age, propped by pillows, and bearing on his countenance the marks of approaching death. But what a countenance it still was! The broad, pale, lofty brow; the fine, straight, Grecian nose; the short, curved lip; the full, dimpled chin; the stamp of genius in every line and lineament—these still defied disease, or, rather, borrowed from its very ghastliness a more impressive majesty. Beside the bed was a table spread with books of a motley character. Here an abstruse system of Calculations on Finance; there a volume of wild Bacchanalian Songs; here the lofty aspirations of Plato's "Phædon;" and there the last speech of some County Paris on a Malt Tax; old newspapers and dusty pamphlets completed the intellectual litter; and above them rose, mournfully enough, the tall, spectral form of a half-emptied vial, and a chamber-candlestick crested by its extinguisher.

A light step approached the bedside, and opposite

the dying man now stood a girl who might have seen her thirteenth year. But her features—of an exceeding, and what may be termed a regal beauty—were as fully developed as those of one who had told twice her years; and not a trace of the bloom or the softness of girlhood could be marked on her countenance. Her complexion was pale as the whitest marble, but clear and lustrous; and her raven hair, parted over her brow in a fashion then uncommon, increased the statue-like and classic effect of her noble features. The expression of her countenance seemed cold, sedate, and somewhat stern: but it might, in some measure, have belied her heart; for, when turned to the moonlight, you might see that her eyes were filled with tears, though she did not weep; and you might tell, by the quivering of her lip, that a little hesitation in replying to any remark from the sufferer arose from her difficulty in commanding her emotions.

"Constance," said the invalid, after a pause, in which he seemed to have been gazing with a quiet heart on the soft skies, that, blue and eloquent with stars, he beheld through the unclosed windows, "Constance, the hour is coming; I feel it by signs which I cannot mistake. I shall die this night."

"Oh, God!—my father!—my dear, dear father!" broke from Constance's lips; "do not speak thus—do not—I will go to Doctor—"

"No, child, no; I loathe, I detest the thought of help! They denied it me while it was yet time. They left me to starve, or to rot in jail, or to hang myself! They left me like a dog, and like a dog I will die! I would not have one iota taken from the justice—the deadly and dooming weight of my dying curse." Here violent spasms broke on the speech of the sufferer; and when, by medicine and his daughter's attentions, he had recovered, he said, in a lower and calmer key, "Is all quiet below, Constance? Are all in bed? The landlady—the servants—our fellow-lodgers?"

"All, my father."

"Ay—then I shall die happy. Thank God, you are

my only nurse and attendant. I remember the day when I was ill after one of their rude debauches. Ill! —a sick headache—a fit of spleen—a spoiled lapdog's illness! Well: they wanted me that night to support one of their paltry measures—their parliamentary measures. And I had a prince feeling my pulse, and a duke mixing my draught, and a dozen earls sending their doctors to me. I was of use to them then! Poor me! Read that note, Constance—Flamborough's note. Do you hesitate? Read it, I say!"

Constance trembled, and complied.

"My dear Vernon,

"I am really *au désespoir* to hear of your melancholy state—so sorry I cannot assist you: but you know my embarrassed circumstances. By-the-by, I saw his royal highness yesterday. 'Poor Vernon!' said he; 'would a hundred pounds do him any good?' So we don't forget you, *mon cher*. Ah! how we missed you at the Beefsteak! Never shall we know again so glorious a *bon vivant*. You would laugh to hear L—— attempting to echo your old jokes. But time presses: I must be off to the House. You know what a motion it is. Would to God you were to bring it on instead of that ass T——. Adieu! I wish I could come and see you; but it would break my heart. Can I send you any books from Hookham's?

"Yours ever, Flamborough."

"This is the man whom I made Secretary of State," said Vernon. "Very well!—oh, it's very well—very well indeed! Let me kiss thee, my girl. Poor Constance! You will have good friends when I am dead! they will be proud enough to minister to Vernon's daughter, when Death has shown that Vernon is a loss. You are very handsome. Your poor mother's eyes and hair—my father's splendid brow and lip; and your figure, even now so stately! They will court you—you will have lords and great men enough at your feet—but you will never forget this night, or the agony of

your father's death-bed face, and the brand they have burned in his heart. And now, Constance, give me the Bible in which you read to me this morning—that will do—stand away from the light, and fix your eyes on mine, and listen as if your soul were in your ear.

"When I was a young man, toiling my way to fortune through the labours of the bar—prudent, cautious, indefatigable, confident of success—certain lords, who heard I possessed genius, and thought I might become their tool, came unto me, and besought me to enter Parliament. I told them I was poor—was lately married—that my public ambition must not be encouraged at the expense of my private fortunes. They answered, that they pledged themselves those fortunes should be their care. I yielded; I deserted my profession; I obeyed their wishes; I became famous—and a ruined man! They could not dine without me; they could not sup without me; they could not get drunk without me; no pleasure was sweet but in my company. What mattered it that, while I ministered to their amusement, I was necessarily heaping debt upon debt—accumulating miseries for future years—laying up bankruptcy, and care, and shame, and a broken heart, and an early death? But listen, Constance! *Are* you listening? attentively? Well! note now, I am a just man. I do not blame my noble friends, my gentle patrons, for this. No: if I were forgetful of my interests, if I preferred their pleasure to my happiness and honour, that was *my* crime, and I deserve the punishment! But, look you—time went by, and my constitution was broken; debts came upon me; I could not pay; men mistrusted my word; my name in the country fell! With my health, my genius deserted me; I was no longer useful to my party; I lost my seat in Parliament; and, when I was on a sick-bed—you remember it, Constance—the bailiffs came, and tore me away for a paltry debt—the value of one of those suppers the prince used to beg me to give him. From that time my familiars forsook me! not a visit, not a kind act, not a service for him whose day of work was over! Poor Vernon's

character was gone! 'Shockingly involved — could not perform his promises to his creditors—always so extravagant—quite unprincipled—must give him up!'

"In those sentences lies the secret of their conduct. They did not remember that *for* them, *by* them, the character was gone, the promises broken, the ruin incurred! They thought not how I had served them; how my best years had been devoted to advance them —to ennoble their cause in the lying page of History! All this was not thought of: my life was reduced to two epochs—that of use to them, that not. During the first I was honoured; during the last I was left to starve, to rot! Who freed me from prison? who protects me now? One of my 'party'—my 'noble friends' —my 'honourable, right honourable friends?' No! a tradesman whom I once served in my holyday, and who alone, of all the world, forgets me not in my penance. You see gratitude, friendship, spring up only in middle life; they grow not in high stations!

"And now come nearer, for my voice falters, and I would have these words distinctly heard. Child, girl as you are—you I consider pledged to record, to fulfil my desire, my curse! Lay your hand on mine: swear that through life to death—swear! You speak not! Repeat my words after me." Constance obeyed— "Through life to death; through good, through ill, through weakness, through power, you will devote yourself to humble, to abase that party from whom your father received ingratitude, mortification, and death! Swear that you will not marry a poor and powerless man, who can minister not to the ends of that solemn retribution I invoke! Swear that you will seek to marry from among the great; not through love, not through ambition, but through hate and for revenge! You will seek to rise that you may humble those who have betrayed me! In the social walks of life you will delight to gall their vanities; in state intrigues you will embrace every measure that can bring them to their eternal downfall. For this great end you will pursue all means—(What! you hesitate? Repeat, repeat, re-

peat!)—You will lie, cringe, fawn, and think vice not vice if it bring you one jot nearer to revenge! With this curse on my foes I entwine my blessing, dear, dear Constance, on you—you, who have nursed, watched, all but saved me! God—God bless you, my child!" And Vernon burst into tears.

It was two hours after this singular scene, and exactly in the third hour of morning, that Vernon woke from a short and troubled sleep. The gray dawn (for the time was the height of summer) already began to labour through the shades and against the stars of night. A raw and comfortless chill crept over the earth, and saddened the air in the death-chamber. Constance sat by her father's bed, her eyes fixed upon him, and her cheek more wan than ever by the pale light of that crude and cheerless dawn. When Vernon woke, his eyes, glazed with death, rolled faintly towards her, fixing and dimming in their sockets as they gazed; his throat rattled. But for one moment his voice found vent; a ray shot across his countenance as he uttered his last words—words that sank at once and eternally to the core of his daughter's heart—words that ruled her life and sealed her destiny: "Constance, remember—the oath—revenge!"

CHAPTER II.

REMARK ON THE TENURE OF LIFE.—THE COFFINS OF GREAT MEN SELDOM NEGLECTED.—CONSTANCE TAKES REFUGE WITH LADY REPINGHAM.—THE HEROINE'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CHARACTER.—THE MANŒUVRING TEMPERAMENT.

What a strange life this is! what puppets we are! How terrible an enigma is Fate! I never set my foot without my door, but what the fearful darkness that

broods over the next moment rushes upon me. How awful an event may hang over our hearts! The sword is always above us, seen or invisible.

And with this life—this scene of darkness and dread—some men would have us so contented as to desire, to ask for no other!

Constance was now without a near relation in the world. But her father predicted rightly: vanity supplied the place of affection. Vernon, who for eighteen months preceding his death had struggled with the sharpest afflictions of want—Vernon, deserted in life by all, was interred with the insulting ceremonials of pomp and state. Six nobles bore his pall: long trains of carriages attended his funeral: the journals were filled with outlines of his biography and lamentations at his decease. They buried him in Westminster Abbey, and they made subscriptions for a monument in the very best sort of marble. Lady Erpingham, a distant connexion of the deceased, invited Constance to live with her; and Constance of course consented, for she had no alternative.

On the day that she arrived at Lady Erpingham's house in Hill-street, there were several persons present in the drawing-room.

"I fear, poor girl," said Lady Erpingham—for they were talking of Constance's expected arrival—"I fear that she will be quite abashed by seeing so many of us, and under such unhappy circumstances."

"How old is she?" asked a beauty.

"About thirteen, I believe."

"Handsome?"

"I have not seen her since she was seven years old. She promised then to be very beautiful: but she was a remarkably shy, silent child."

"Miss Vernon," said the groom of the chamber, throwing open the door.

With the slow step and self-possessed air of womanhood, but with a far haughtier and far colder mien than women commonly assume, Constance Vernon walked through the long apartment and greeted her fa-

ture guardian. Though every eye was on her, she did not blush; though the queens of the London world were round her, her gait and air were more royal than all. Every one present experienced a revulsion of feeling. They were prepared for pity; this was no case in which pity could be given. Even the words of protection died on Lady Erpingham's lip, and *she* it was who felt bashful and disconcerted.

I intend to pass rapidly over the years that elapsed till Constance became a woman. Let us glance at her education. Vernon had not only had her instructed in the French and Italian, but, a deep and impassioned scholar himself, he had taught her the elements of the two great languages of the ancient world. The treasures of those languages she afterward conquered of her own accord.

Lady Erpingham had one daughter, who married when Constance had reached the age of sixteen. The advantages Lady Eleanor Erpingham possessed in her masters and her governess, Constance shared. Miss Vernon drew well and sang divinely, but she made no very great proficiency in the science of music. To say truth, her mind was somewhat too stern, and somewhat too intent on other subjects, to surrender to that most jealous of accomplishments the exclusive devotion it requires.

But of all her attractions, and of all the evidences of her cultivated mind, none equalled the extraordinary grace of her conversation. Wholly disregarding the conventional leading-strings in which the minds of young ladies are accustomed to be held—leading-strings disguised by the name of "proper diffidence" and "becoming modesty"—she never scrupled to share, nay, to lead, discussions even of a grave and solid nature. Still less did she scruple to invest the common trifles that make the sum of conversation with the fascinations of a wit, which, playful yet deep, rivalled even the paternal source from which it was inherited.

It seems sometimes odd enough to me, that, while young ladies are so sedulously taught all the accom-

plishments that a husband disregards, they are never taught the great one he would prize. They are taught to be *exhibitors;* he wants a *companion*. He wants neither a singing animal, nor a drawing animal, nor a dancing animal; he wants a talking animal. But to talk they are never taught; all they know of it is slander, and that "comes by nature."

But Constance *did* talk *beautifully:* not like a pedant, or a *blue*, or a Frenchwoman. A child would have been as much charmed with her as a *savant;* but *both* would have been charmed. Her father's eloquence had descended to her; but in him eloquence commanded, in her it won. There was another trait she possessed in common with her father: Vernon (as most disappointed men are wont) had done the world injustice by his accusations. It was not his poverty and his distresses alone which had induced his party to look coolly on his declining day. They were not without some apparent excuse for desertion: they doubted his *sincerity*. It is true that it was without actual cause. No modern politician had ever been more consistent. He had refused bribes, though poor; and place, though ambitious. But he was essentially —here is the secret—essentially an *intriguant*. Bred in the old school of policy, he thought manœuvring wisdom, and duplicity the art of governing. Like Lysander,* he loved plotting, yet neglected self-interest. There was not a man less open or more honest. This character, so rare in all countries, is especially so in England. Your blunt squires, your politicians at Bellamy's, do not comprehend it. They saw in Vernon the arts which deceive enemies, and they dreaded lest, though his friends, they themselves should be deceived. This disposition, so fatal to Vernon, his daughter inherited. With a dark, bold, and passionate genius, that in a man would have led to the highest enterprises, she linked the feminine love of secrecy and scheming. To borrow again from Plutarch and Lysander, "When the skin of the lion fell short, she was quite of opinion that it should be eked out with the fox's."

* Plutarch's "Life of Lysander."

CHAPTER III.

THE HERO INTRODUCED TO OUR READER'S NOTICE.—DIALOGUE BETWEEN HIMSELF AND HIS FATHER.—PERCY GODOLPHIN'S CHARACTER AS A BOY.—THE CATASTROPHE OF HIS SCHOOL LIFE.

"PERCY, remember that it is to-morrow you will return to school," said Mr. Godolphin to his only son.

Percy pouted, and, after a momentary silence, replied, "No, father, I think I shall go to Mr. Saville's. He has asked me to spend a month with him; and he says rightly that I shall learn more with him than at Dr. Shallowell's, where I am already head of the sixth form."

"Mr. Saville is a coxcomb, and you are another!" replied the father, who, dressed in an old flannel dressing-gown, with a worn velvet cap on his head, and cowering gloomily over a wretched fire, seemed no bad personification of that mixture of half-hypochondriac, half-miser, which he was in reality. "Don't talk to me of going to town, sir, or—"

"Father," interrupted Percy, in a cool and *nonchalant* tone, as he folded his arms and looked straight and shrewdly on the paternal face, "father, let us understand each other. My schooling, I suppose, is rather an expensive affair?"

"You may well say that, sir! Expensive!—it is frightful, horrible, ruinous! Expensive! Twenty pounds a year, board and Latin; five guineas washing; five more writing and arithmetic. Sir, if I were not resolved that you should not want education, though you may want fortune, I should—yes, I should—What do you mean, sir?—you are laughing! Is this your respect, your gratitude to your father?"

A slight shade fell over the bright and intelligent countenance of the boy.

"Don't let us talk of gratitude," said he, sadly; "God knows what either you or I have to be grateful for! Fortune has left to your proud name but these bare walls and a handful of barren acres; to me she gave a father's affection—not such as Nature had made it, but cramped and soured by misfortunes."

Here Percy paused, and his father seemed also struck and affected. "Let us," renewed, in a lighter strain, this singular boy, who might have passed, by some months, his fifteenth year, "let us see if we cannot accommodate matters to our mutual satisfaction. You can ill afford my schooling, and I am resolved that at school I will not stay. Saville is a relation of ours; he has taken a fancy to me; he has even hinted that he may leave me his fortune; and he has promised, at least, to afford me a home and his tuition as long as I like. Give me free passport hereafter to come and go as I list, and I in turn will engage never to cost you another shilling. Come, sir, shall it be a compact?"

"You wound me, Percy," said the father, with a mournful pride in his tone: "I have not deserved this, at least from you. You know not, boy—you know not all that has hardened this heart; but to you it has *not* been hard; and a taunt from you—yes, that *is* the serpent's tooth!"

Percy in an instant was at his father's feet; he seized both his hands, and burst into a passionate fit of tears. "Forgive me," he said, in broken words; "I —I meant not to taunt you. I am but a giddy boy! send me to school! do with me as you will!"

"Ay," said the old man, shaking his head gently, "you know not what pain a son's bitter word can send to a parent's heart. But it is all natural, perfectly natural! You would reproach me with a love of money; it is the sin youth is least lenient to. But what! can I look round the world, and not see its value, its necessity? Year after year, from my first manhood, I have toiled and toiled to preserve from the hammer these last remnants of my ancestors' domains. Year after year fortune has slipped from my grasp; and, after all

my efforts, and towards the close of a long life, I stand on the very verge of penury. But you cannot tell—no man whose heart is not seamed with many years can tell, or can appreciate the motives that have formed my character. You, however"—and his voice softened as he laid his hand on his son's head—"you, however—the gay, the bold, the young—should not have your brow crossed and your eye dimmed by the cares that surround me. Go! I will accompany you to town; I will see Saville myself. If he be one with whom my son can, at so tender an age, be safely trusted, you shall pay him the visit you wish."

Percy would have replied, but his father checked him; and, before the end of the evening, the father had resolved to forget as much as he pleased of the conversation.

The elder Godolphin was one of those characters on whom it is vain to attempt making a permanent impression. The habits of his mind were durably formed: like waters, they yielded to any sudden intrusion, but closed instantly again. Early in life he had been taught that he ought to marry an heiress for the benefit of his estate—his ancestral estate; the restoration of which he had been bred to consider the grand object and ambition of life. His views had been strangely baffled; but, the more they were thwarted, the more pertinaciously he clung to them. Naturally kind, generous, and social, he had sunk at length into the anchorite and the miser. All other speculations that should retrieve his ancestral honours had failed: but there is one speculation that never fails—the speculation of *saving!* It was to this that he now indissolubly attached himself. At moments he was open to all his old habits, but those moments were rare and few. A cold, hard, frosty penuriousness was his prevalent characteristic. He had sent his son, with eighteen pence in his pocket, to a school of twenty pounds a year, where, naturally enough, he learned nothing but mischief and cricket; yet he conceived that his son owed him eternal obligations.

Luckily for Percy, he was an especial favourite with a certain not uncelebrated character of the name of Saville; and Saville claimed the privilege of a relation to supply him with money and receive him at his home. Wild, passionate, fond to excess of pleasure, the young Godolphin caught eagerly at these occasional visits; and at each his mind, keen and penetrating as it naturally was, took new flights and revelled in new views. He was already the leader of his school, the torment of the master, and the lover of the master's daughter. He was fifteen years old, but a character. A secret pride, a secret bitterness, and an open wit and recklessness of bearing, rendered him, to all seeming, a boy more endowed with energies than affections. Yet a kind word from a friend's lips was never without its effect on him, and he might have been led by the silk while he would have snapped the chain. But these were his boyish traits of mind: the world soon altered them.

The subject of the visit to Saville was not again touched upon. A little reflection showed Mr. Godolphin how nugatory were the promises of a schoolboy that he should not cost his father another shilling; and he knew that Saville's house was not exactly the spot in which economy was best learned. He thought it, therefore, more prudent that his son should return to school.

To school went Percy Godolphin; and, about three weeks afterward, Percy Godolphin was condemned to expulsion for returning, with considerable unction, a slap in the face that he had received from Dr. Shallowell. Instead of waiting for his father's arrival, Percy made up a small bundle of clothes, and let himself drop, by the help of the bed-curtains, from the window of the room in which he was confined, and towards the close of a fine summer's evening found himself on the high road between **** and London, with independence at his heart and (Saville's last gift) ten guineas in his pocket.

CHAPTER IV.

PERCY'S FIRST ADVENTURE AS A FREE AGENT.

It was a fine, picturesque outline of road on which the young outcast found himself journeying, whither he neither knew nor cared. His heart was full of enterprise and the unfleshed valour of inexperience. He had proceeded several miles, and the dusk of the evening was setting in, when he observed a stage-coach crawling heavily up a hill a little ahead of him, and a tall, well-shaped man walking alongside of it, and gesticulating somewhat violently. Godolphin remarked him with some curiosity; and the man, turning abruptly round, perceived, and in his turn noticed very inquisitively, the person and aspect of the young traveller.

"And how now?" said he, presently, and in an agreeable though familiar and unceremonious tone of voice; "whither are you bound this time of day?"

"It is no business of yours, friend," said the boy, with the proud petulance of his age; "mind what belongs to yourself."

"You are sharp on me, young sir," returned the other: "but it is our business to be loquacious. Know, sir"—and the stranger frowned—"that we have ordered many a taller fellow than yourself to execution for a much smaller insolence than you seem capable of."

A laugh from the coach caused Godolphin to lift up his eyes, and he saw the door of the vehicle half open, as if for coolness, and an arch female face looking down on him.

"You are merry on me, I see," said Percy: "come out, and I'll be even with you, pretty one."

The lady laughed yet more loudly at the premature gallantry of the traveller; but the man, without heeding her, and laying his hand on Percy's shoulder, said,

"Pray, sir, do you live at B**** ?" naming the town they were now approaching.

"Not I," said Godolphin, freeing himself from the intrusion.

"You will, perhaps, sleep there?"

"Perhaps I shall."

"You are too young to travel alone."

"And you are too old to make such impertinent remarks," retorted Godolphin, reddening with anger.

"Faith, I like this spirit, my Hotspur," said the stranger, coolly. "If you are really going to put up for the night at B****, suppose we sup together."

"And who and what are you?" asked Percy, bluntly.

"Anything and everything; in other words, an actor!"

"And the young lady—?"

"Is our prima donna. In fact, except our driver, the coach holds none but the ladies and gentlemen of our company. We have made an excellent harvest at A****, and we are now on our way to the theatre at B****; pretty theatre it is, too, and has been known to hold seventy-one pounds eight shillings." Here the actor fell into a revery; and Percy, moving nearer to the coach door, glanced at the damsel, who returned the look with a laugh which, though coquettish, was too low and musical to be called bold.

"So that gentleman, so free and easy in his manners, is not your husband?"

"Heaven forbid! Do you think I should be so gay if he were? But, pooh! what can you know of married life? No!" she continued, with a pretty air of mock dignity, "I am the *Belvidera*, the *Calista* of the company; above all control, all husbanding, and reaping thirty-three shillings a week."

"But are you above lovers as well as husbands?" asked Percy, with a rakish air, borrowed from Saville.

"Bless the boy! No: but then my lovers must be at least as tall, and at least as rich, and, I am afraid, at least as old, as myself."

"Don't frighten yourself, my dear," returned Percy; "*I* was not about to make love to you."

"Were you not? Yes you were, and you know it. But why won't you sup with us?"

"Why not, indeed?" thought Percy, as the idea, thus more enticingly put than it was at first, pressed upon him. "If *you* ask me," said he, "I will."

"I *do* ask you, then," said the actress; and here the hero of the company turned abruptly round with a theatrical start—said he to Godolphin, "To sup or not to sup? that is the question."

"To sup, sir," said Godolphin.

"Very well; I am glad to hear it. Had you not better mount, and rest yourself in the coach? You can take my place; I am studying a new part. We have two miles farther to B**** yet."

Percy accepted the invitation, and was soon by the side of the pretty actress. The horses broke into a slow trot, and thus, delighted with his adventure, the son of the ascetic Godolphin, the pupil of the courtly Saville, entered the town of B****, and commenced his first independent campaign in *the great world*.

CHAPTER V.

THE MUMMERS.—GODOLPHIN IN LOVE.—THE EFFECT OF FANNY MILLINGER'S ACTING UPON HIM.—THE TWO OFFERS.—GODOLPHIN QUITS THE PLAYERS.

Our travellers stopped at the first inn in the outskirts of the town. Here they were shown into a large room on the ground floor, sanded, with a long table in the centre; and, before the supper was served, Percy had leisure to examine all the companions with whom he had associated himself.

In the first place, there was an old gentleman of the age of sixty-three, in a bob-wig, and inclined to be stout, who always played the *lover*. He was equally

excellent in the pensive *Romeo* and the bustling *Rapid*. He had an ill way of talking off the stage, partly because he had lost all his front teeth; a circumstance which made him avoid, in general, those parts in which he had to force a great deal of laughter. Next, there was a little girl of about fourteen, who played angels, faries, and, at a pinch, was very effective as an old woman. Thirdly, there was our free-and-easy cavalier, who, having a loud voice and a manly presence, usually performed the tyrant. He was great in "Macbeth," greater in "Bombastes Furioso." Fourthly came this gentleman's wife, a pretty, slatternish woman, much painted. She usually performed the second female—the confidant, the chambermaid—the *Emilia* to the *Desdemona*. And, fifthly, was Percy's new inamorata—a girl of about one-and-twenty, fair, with a *nez retroussé*: beautiful auburn hair, that was always a little dishevelled; the prettiest mouth, teeth, and dimple imaginable; a natural colour, and a person that promised to incline hereafter towards that roundness of proportion which is more dear to the sensual than the romantic. This girl, whose name was Fanny Millinger, was of so frank, good-humoured, and lively a turn, that she was the idol of the whole company, and her superiority in acting was never made a matter of jealousy. Actors may believe this or not, as they please.

"But is this all your company?" said Percy.

"All? No!" replied Fanny, taking off her bonnet, and curling up her tresses by the help of a dim glass. "The rest are provided at the theatre along with the candle-snuffer and scene-shifters—part of the fixed property. Why won't *you* take to the stage? I wish you would! you would make a very respectable—page."

"Upon my word!" said Percy, exceedingly offended.

"Come, come!" cried the actress, slapping her hands, and perfectly unheeding his displeasure, "why don't you help me off with my cloak? why don't you set me a chair? why don't you take this great box out

of my way? why don't you—Heaven help me!" and she stamped her little foot quite seriously on the floor. "A pretty person for a lover you are!"

"Oho! then I *am* a lover, you acknowledge?"

"Nonsense! get a chair next me at supper."

The young Godolphin was perfectly fascinated by the lively actress; and it was with no small interest that he stationed himself the following night in the stage-box of the little theatre at ***, to see how his Fanny acted. The house was tolerably well filled, and the play was "She Stoops to Conquer." The male parts were, on the whole, respectably managed; though Percy was somewhat surprised to observe that a man, who had joined the corps that morning, blessed with the most solemn countenance in the world—a fine Roman nose, and a forehead like a sage's—was now dressed in nankeen tights, and a coat without skirts, splitting the sides of the gallery in the part of *Tony Lumpkin*. But into the heroine Fanny Millinger threw a grace, a sweetness, a simple yet dignified spirit of true love, that at once charmed and astonished all present. The applause was unbounded; and Percy Godolphin felt proud of himself for having admired one whom every one else seemed also resolved upon admiring.

When the comedy was finished he went behind the scenes, and for the first time felt the rank which intellect bestows. This idle girl, with whom he had before been so familiar; who had seemed to him, boy as he was, only made for jesting, and coquetry, and trifling, he now felt to be raised to a sudden eminence that startled and abashed him. He became shy and awkward, and stood at a distance stealing a glance towards her, but without the courage to approach and compliment her.

The quick eye of the actress detected the effect she had produced. She was naturally pleased at it, and, coming up to Godolphin, she touched his shoulder, and with a smile rendered still more brilliant by the rouge yet unwashed from the dimpled cheeks, said, "Well,

most awkward swain! no flattery ready for me? Go to! you won't suit me: get yourself another empress!"

"You have pleased me into respecting you," said Godolphin.

There was a delicacy in the expression that was very characteristic of the real mind of the speaker, though that mind was not yet developed; and the pretty actress was touched by it at the moment, though, despite the grace of her acting, she was by nature far too volatile to think it at all advantageous to be *respected* on the long run. She did not act in the afterpiece, and Godolphin escorted her home to the inn.

So long as his ten guineas lasted—which the reader will conceive was not very long—Godolphin stayed with the gay troop as the welcome lover of its chief ornament. To her he confided his name and history: she laughed heartily at the latter, for she was one of Venus's true children, fond of striking mirth out of all subjects. "But what," said she, patting his cheek affectionately, "what should hinder you from joining us for a little while? I could teach you to be an actor in three lessons. Come now, attend! It is but a mere series of tricks, this art that seems to you so admirable."

Godolphin grew embarrassed. There was in him a sort of hidden pride that could never endure to subject itself to the censure of others. He had no propensity to imitation, and he had a strong susceptibility to the ridiculous. These traits of mind, thus early developed—which in later life prevented his ever finding fit scope for his natural powers, which made him too proud to bustle and too philosophical to shine—were of service to him on this occasion, and preserved him from the danger into which he might otherwise have fallen. He could not be persuaded to act: the fair Fanny gave up the attempt in despair. "Yet stay with us," said she, tenderly, "and share my poor earnings."

Godolphin started; and in the wonderful contradic-

tions of the proud human heart, this generous offer from the poor actress gave him a distaste, a displeasure, that almost reconciled him to parting from her. It seemed to open to him at once the equivocal mode of life he had entered upon. "No, Fanny," said he, after a pause, "I am here because I resolved to be independent: I cannot, therefore, choose dependance."

"Miss Millinger is wanted instantly for rehearsal," said the little girl who acted fairies and old women, putting her head suddenly into the room.

"Bless me!" cried Fanny, starting up; "is it so late? Well, I must go now. Good-by! look in upon us—do."

But Godolphin, moody and thoughtful, walked into the street; and, lo! the first thing that greeted his eyes was a handbill on the wall, describing his own person, and offering twenty guineas reward for his detention. "Let him return to his afflicted parent," was the conclusion of the bill, "and all shall be forgiven."

Godolphin crept back to his apartment; wrote a long, affectionate letter to Fanny; enclosed her his watch, as the only keepsake in his power; gave her his address at Saville's; and then, waiting till dark, once more sallied forth, and took a place on the mail for London. He had no money for his passage, but his appearance was such that the coachman readily trusted him; and the next morning at daybreak he was under Saville's roof.

CHAPTER VI.

PERCY GODOLPHIN THE GUEST OF SAVILLE.—HE ENTERS THE LIFE-GUARDS, AND BECOMES DU BON TON.

"And so," said Saville, laughing, "you really gave them the slip: excellent! But I envy you your adventures with the player-folk. Gad! if I were some

years younger, I would join them myself; I should act *Sir Pertinax Macsycophant* famously; I have a touch of the mime in me. Well! but what do you propose to do? Live with me? eh!"

"Why, I think that might be the best, and certainly it would be the pleasantest, mode of passing my life. But—"

"But what?"

"Why, I can scarcely quarter myself on your courtesy; I should soon grow discontented. So I shall write to my father, whom I, kindly and considerately, by-the-way, informed of my safety the very first day of my arrival in B****. I told him to direct his letters to your house; but I regret to find that the handbill which so frightened me from my propriety is the only notice he has deigned to take of my whereabout. I shall write to him, therefore, again, begging him to let me enter the army. It is not a profession I much fancy; but what then? I shall be my own master."

"Very well said!" answered Saville; "and here I hope I can serve you. If your father will pay the lawful sum for a commission in the Guards, why, I think I have interest to get you in for that sum alone—no trifling favour."

Godolphin was enchanted at this proposal, and instantly wrote to his father, urging it strongly upon him; Saville, in a separate epistle, seconded the motion. "You see," wrote the latter, "you see, my dear sir, that your son is a wild, resolute scapegrace. You can do nothing with him by schools and coercion: put him to discipline in the king's service, and condemn him to live on his pay. It is a cheap mode, after all, of providing for a reprobate; and as he will have the good fortune to enter the army at so early an age, by the time he is thirty he may be a colonel on full-pay. Seriously, this is the best thing you can do with him, unless you have a living in your family."

The old gentleman was much discomposed by these letters and by his son's previous elopement. He could not, however, but foresee that, if he resisted the boy's

wishes, he was likely to have a troublesome time of it. Scrape after scrape, difficulty following difficulty, might ensue, all costing both anxiety and money. The present offer furnished him with a fair excuse for ridding himself, for a long time to come, of farther provision for his offspring; and now growing daily more and more attached to the indolent routine of solitary economies in which he moved, he was glad of an opportunity to deliver himself from future interruption, and surrender his whole soul to his favourite occupation.

At length, after a fortnight's delay and meditation, he wrote shortly to Saville and his son; saying, after much reproach to the latter, that if the commission could really be purchased at the sum specified, he was willing to make a sacrifice, for which he must pinch himself, and conclude the business. This touched the son, but Saville laughed him out of the twinge of good feeling; and very shortly afterward Percy Godolphin was gazetted as a cornet in the —— Life Guards.

The life of a soldier, in peace, is indolent enough, Heaven knows! Percy liked the new uniforms and the new horses—all of which were bought on credit. He liked his new companions; he liked balls; he liked flirting; he did not dislike Hyde Park from four o'clock till six; and he was not very much bored by drills and parade. It was much to his credit in the world that he was the *protégé* of a man who had so great a character for profligacy and gambling as Augustus Saville; and, under such auspices, he found himself launched at once into the full tide of "good society."

Young, romantic, high-spirited—with the classic features of an Antinous, and a very pretty knack of complimenting and writing verses—Percy Godolphin soon became, while yet more fit in years for the nursery than the world, "the curled darling" of that wide class of highborn women who have nothing to do but to hear love made to them, and who, all artifice themselves, think the love sweetest which springs from the most natural source. They like boyhood when it is

not bashful; and from fifteen to twenty, a Juan need scarcely go to Seville to find a Julia.

But love was not the worst danger that menaced the intoxicated boy. Saville, the most seductive of tutors —Saville, who, in his wit, his *bon ton*, his control over the great world, seemed as a god to all less elevated and less aspiring—Saville was Godolphin's constant companion; and Saville was worse than a profligate—he was a gambler! One would think that gaming was the last vice that could fascinate the young: its avarice, its grasping, its hideous selfishness, its cold, calculating meanness, would, one might imagine, scare away all who have yet other and softer deities to worship. But, in fact, the fault of youth is, that it can rarely resist whatever is the Mode. Gaming, in all countries, is the vice of an aristocracy. The young find it already established in the best circles; they are enticed by the habit of others, and ruined when the habit becomes their own.

"You look feverish, Percy," said Saville, as he met his pupil in the Park. "I don't wonder at it: you lost infernally last night."

"More than I can pay," replied Percy, with a quivering lip.

"No! you shall pay it to-morrow, for you shall go shares with me to-night. Observe," continued Saville, lowering his voice, "I *never lose*."

"How! *never?*"

"Never, unless by design. I play at no game where chance only presides. Whist is my favourite game: it is not popular: I am sorry for it. I take up with other games—I am forced to do it; but, even at *rouge et noir*, I carry about with me the rules of whist. I calculate—I remember."

"But *hazard?*"

"I never play at that!" said Saville, solemnly. "It is the devil's game; it defies skill. Forsake *hazard*, and let me teach you *écarté;* it is coming into fashion."

Saville took great pains with Godolphin; and Go-

dolphin, who was by nature of a contemplative, not hasty mood, was no superficial disciple. As his biographer, I grieve to confess that he became, though a punctiliously honest, a wise and fortunate gamester; and thus he eked out betimes the slender profits of a subaltern's pay.

This was the first great moral deterioration in Percy's mind: a mind which ought to have made him a very different being from what he became, but which no vice, no evil example, could ever entirely pervert.

CHAPTER VII.

SAVILLE EXCUSED FROM HAVING HUMAN AFFECTIONS.—GODOLPHIN SEES ONE WHOM HE NEVER SEES AGAIN.—THE NEW ACTRESS.

SAVILLE was deemed the consummate man of the world—wise and heartless. How came he to take such gratuitous pains with the boy Godolphin? In the first place, Saville had no legitimate children; Godolphin was his relation: in the second place, it may be observed, that hackneyed and *blasés* men of the world are fond of the young, in whom they recognise something—a better something—belonging to themselves. In Godolphin's gentleness and courage, Saville thought he saw the mirror of his own crusted urbanity and scheming perseverance; in Godolphin's fine imagination and subtle intellect he beheld his own cunning and hypocrisy. The boy's popularity flattered him; the boy's conversation amused. No man is so heartless but that he is capable of strong likings when they do not put him much out of his way: it was this sort of liking that Saville had for Godolphin. Besides, there was yet another reason for attachment, which might at first seem too delicate to actuate the refined

voluptuary; but, examined closely, the delicacy vanished. Saville had loved—at least, had offered his hand to—Godolphin's mother (she was supposed an heiress!). He thought he had just missed being Godolphin's father: his vanity made him like to show the boy what a much better father he would have been than the one that Providence had given him. His resentment, too, against the accepted suiter made him love to exercise a little spiteful revenge against Godolphin's father: he was glad to show that the son preferred where the mother rejected. All these motives combined made Saville take, as it were, to the young Percy; and being rich, and habitually profuse, though prudent, and a shrewd speculator withal, the pecuniary part of his kindness cost him no pain. But Godolphin, who was not ostentatious, did not trust himself largely to the capricious fount of the worldling's generosity. Fortune smiled on her boyish votary; and, during the short time he was obliged to cultivate her favours, showered on him at least a sufficiency for support, or even for display.

Crowded with fine people and blazing with light were the rooms of the Countess of B——, as, flushed from a late dinner at Saville's, young Godolphin made his appearance in the scene. He was not of those numerous gentlemen, the stock-flowers of the parterre, who stick themselves up against walls in the panoply of neckclothed silence. He came not to balls from the vulgar motive of being seen there in the most conspicuous situation—a motive so apparent among the stiff exquisites of England. He came to amuse himself; and if he found no one capable of amusing him, he saw no necessity in staying. He was always seen, therefore, conversing, or dancing, or listening to music —or he was not seen at all.

In exchanging a few words with a Colonel D——, a noted *roué* and gamester, he observed, gazing on him very intently—and, as Percy thought, very rudely—an old gentleman in a dress of the last century. Turn where he would, Godolphin could not rid himself of

the gaze; so at length he met it with a look of equal scrutiny and courage. The old gentleman slowly approached. "Percy Godolphin, I think?" said he.

"That is *my* name, sir," replied Percy. "Yours—"

"No matter! Yet stay! you shall know it. I am Henry Johnstone—old Harry Johnstone. You have heard of him?—your father's first cousin. Well, I grieve, young sir, to find that you associate with that rascal Saville. Nay, never interrupt me, sir!—I grieve to find that you, thus young, thus unguarded, are left to be ruined in heart and corrupted in nature by any one who will take the trouble! Yet I like your countenance!—I like your countenance!—it is open, yet thoughtful; frank, and yet it has something of melancholy. You have not Charles's coloured hair; but you are much younger—much. I am glad I have seen you; I came here on purpose: good-night!" and, without waiting for an answer, the old man disappeared.

Godolphin, recovering his surprise, recollected that he had often heard his father speak of a rich and eccentric relation named Johnstone: this singular interview made a strong but momentary impression on him. He intended to seek out the old man's residence; but one thing or another drove away the fulfilment of the intention, and in this world the relations never met again.

Percy, now musingly gliding through the crowd, sank into a seat beside a lady of forty-five, who sometimes amused herself in making love to him—because there could be no harm in such a mere boy! and presently afterward, a Lord George Somebody, sauntering up, asked the lady if he had not seen her at the play on the previous night.

"Oh yes! we went to see the new actress. How pretty she is!—so unaffected too—how well she sings!"

"Pretty well—er!" replied Lord George, passing his hand through his hair. "Very nice girl—er! good ankles. Devilish hot—er, is not it—er—er? What a bore this is: eh! Ah! Godolphin! don't forget Wattier's—er!" and his lordship *er*'d himself off.

"What actress is this?"

"Oh, a very good one, indeed!—came out in 'The Belle's Stratagem.' We are going to see her to-morrow: will you dine with us early, and be our cavalier?"

"Nothing will please me more! Your ladyship has dropped your handkerchief."

"Thank you!" said the lady, bending till her hair touched Godolphin's cheek, and gently pressing the hand that was extended to her. It was a wonder that Godolphin never became a coxcomb.

He dined the next day according to appointment: he went to the play; and, at the moment his eye first turned to the stage, a universal burst of applause indicated the *entrée* of the new actress—Fanny Millinger!

CHAPTER VIII.

GODOLPHIN'S PASSION FOR THE STAGE.—THE DIFFERENCE IT ENGENDERED IN HIS HABITS OF LIFE.

Now this event produced a great influence over Godolphin's habits—and I suppose, therefore, I may add, over his character. He renewed his acquaintance with the lively actress.

"What a change!" cried both.

"The strolling player risen into celebrity!"

"And the runaway boy polished into fashion!"

"You are handsomer than ever, Fanny."

"I return the compliment," replied Fanny, with a courtesy.

And now Godolphin became a constant attendant at the theatre. This led him into a mode of life quite different from that which he had lately cultivated.

There are in London two sets of idle men: one set, the butterflies of balls; the loungers of the regular walks of society; diners-out; the "old familiar

faces," seen everywhere, known to every one: the other set, a more wild, irregular, careless race, who go little into parties, and vote balls a nuisance; who live in clubs, frequent theatres, drive about late o' nights in mysterious-looking vehicles, and enjoy a vast acquaintance among the Aspasias of pleasure. These are the men who are the critics of theatricals: black-neckclothed and well-booted, they sit in their boxes and decide on the ankles of a dancer or the voice of a singer. They have a smattering of literature, and use a great deal of French in their conversation: they have something of romance in their composition, and have been known to marry for love. In short, there is in their whole nature a more roving, liberal, Continental character of dissipation than belongs to the cold, tame, dull, prim, hedge-clipped indolence of more national exquisitism. Into this set, out of the other set, fell young Godolphin; and oh! the merry mornings at actresses' houses; the jovial suppers after the play; the buoyancy, the brilliancy, the *esprit*, with which the hours, from midnight to cock-crow, were often pelted with rose-leaves and drowned in Rhenish.

By degrees, however, as Godolphin warmed into his attendance at the playhouses, the fine intellectual something that lay yet undestroyed at his heart stirred up emotions which he felt his more vulgar associates were unfitted to share.

There is that in theatrical representation which perpetually awakens whatever romance belongs to our character. The magic lights; the pomp of scene; the palace, the camp; the forest; the midnight world; the imaged moonlight on the water; the melody of the tragic rhythm; the grace of the comic wit; the strange art that gives such meaning to the poet's lightest word; the fair, false, exciting life that is detailed before us —crowding into some three little hours all that our most busy ambition could desire—love, enterprise, war, glory! the kindling exaggeration of the sentiments which belong to the stage—like our own in our bold-

est moments: all these appeals to our finer senses are not made in vain. Our taste for castle-building and visions deepens upon us; and we chew a mental opium, which stagnates all the other faculties, but wakens that of the ideal.

Godolphin was peculiarly fascinated by the stage; he loved to steal away from his companions, and, alone and unheeded, to feast his mind on the unreal stream of existence that mirrored images so beautiful. And oh! while yet we are young—while yet the dew lingers on the green leaf of spring—while all the brighter, the more enterprising part of the future is to come—while we know not whether the true life may not be visionary and excited as the false—how deep and rich a transport is it to see, to feel, to hear Shakspeare's conceptions made *actual*, though all imperfectly, and only for an hour! Sweet Arden! are we in thy forest? thy "shadowy groves and unfrequented glens?" Rosalind, Jaques, Orlando, have you indeed a being upon earth? Ah! this is true enchantment! and, when we turn back to life, we turn from the colours which the Claude glass breathes over a winter's landscape to the nakedness of the landscape itself!

CHAPTER IX.

THE LEGACY.—A NEW DEFORMITY IN SAVILLE.—THE NATURE OF WORLDLY LIAISONS.—GODOLPHIN LEAVES ENGLAND.

But then it is not always a sustainer of the stage delusion to be enamoured of an actress: it takes us too much behind the scenes. Godolphin felt this so strongly that he liked those plays least in which Fanny performed. Off the stage her character had so little romance, that he could not deceive himself into the

romance of her character before the lamps. Luckily, however, Fanny did not attempt Shakspeare. She was inimitable in vaudeville, in farce, and in the lighter comedy; but she had prudently abandoned tragedy in deserting the barn. She was a girl of much talent and quickness, and discovered exactly the paths in which her vanity could walk without being wounded. And there was a simplicity, a frankness about her manner, that made her a most agreeable companion.

The attachment between her and Godolphin was not very violent; it was a silken tie, which opportunity could knot and snap a hundred times over without doing much wrong to the hearts it so lightly united. Over Godolphin the attachment itself had no influence, while the *effects* of the attachment had an influence so great.

One night, after an absence from town of two or three days, Godolphin returned home from the theatre, and found among the letters waiting his arrival one from his father. It was edged with black; the seal, too, was black. Godolphin's heart misgave him: tremblingly he opened it, and read as follows:

"Dear Percy,

"I have news for you, which I do not know whether I should call good or bad. On the one hand, your cousin, that old oddity, Harry Johnstone, is dead, and has left you, out of his immense fortune, the poor sum of twenty thousand pounds. But mark! on condition that you leave the Guards, and either reside with me, or, at least, leave London till your majority is attained. If you refuse these conditions, you lose the legacy. It is rather strange that this curious character should take such pains with your morals, and yet not leave *me* a single shilling. But justice is out of fashion nowadays; your showy virtues only are the rage. I beg, if you choose to come down here, that you will get me twelve yards of house-flannel; I enclose a pattern of the quality. Snugg, in Oxford-street, near Tottenham Court Road, is my man. It is certainly a

handsome thing in old Johnstone: but so odd to omit me. How did you get acquainted with him? The twenty thousand pounds will, however, do much for the poor property. Pray take care of it, Percy—pray do.

"I have had a touch of the gout for the first time. I have been too luxurious: by proper abstinence, I trust to bring it down. Compliments to that smooth rogue Saville.

"Your affectionate

"A. G.

"P.S.—Discharged Old Sally for flirting with the butcher's boy: flirtations of that sort make meat weigh much heavier. Bess is my only she helpmate now, besides the old creature who shows the ruins: so much the better. What an eccentric creature that Johnstone was! I hate eccentric people."

The letter fell from Percy's hands. And this, then, was the issue of his single interview with the poor old man? It was events like these, wayward and strange (events which checkered his whole life), that, secretly to himself, tinged Godolphin's character with superstition. He afterward dealt *con amore* with fatalities and influences.

You may be sure that he did not sleep much that night. Early the next morning he sought Saville, and imparted to him the intelligence he had received.

"Droll enough!" said Saville, languidly, and more than a little displeased at this generosity to Godolphin from another; for, like all small-hearted persons, he was jealous; "droll enough! hem! and you never knew him but once, and then he abused me? I wonder at that; I was very obliging to his vulgar son."

"What! he had a son, then?"

"Some two-legged creature of that sort, raw and bony, dropped into London like a ptarmigan, wild, and scared out of his wits. Old Johnstone was in the country, taking care of his wife, who had lost the use of her limbs ever since she had been married: caught

a violent—husband—the first day of wedlock! The boy, sole son and heir, came up to town at the age of discretion; got introduced to me; I patronised him; brought him into a decent degree of fashion; played a few games at cards with him; won some money; would not win any more; advised him to leave off; too young to play; neglected my advice; went on, and, d—n the fellow! if he did not cut his throat one morning; and the father, to my astonishment, laid the blame upon me!"

Godolphin stood appalled in speechless disgust. He never *loved* Saville from that hour.

"In fact," resumed Saville, carelessly, "he had lost very considerably. His father was a stern, hard man, and the poor boy was frightened at the thought of his displeasure. I suppose Monsieur Papa imagines me a sort of moral ogre, eating up all the little youths that fall in my way! since he leaves you twenty thousand pounds, on condition that you take care of yourself, and shun the castle I live in. Well, well! 'tis all very flattering! And where will you go? To Spain?"

This story affected Percy sensibly. He regretted deeply that he had not sought out the bereaved father, and been of some comfort to his later hours. He appreciated all that warmth of sympathy, that delicacy of heart, which had made the old man compassionate his young relation's unfriended lot, and couple his gift with a condition, likely, perhaps, to moderate Percy's desires to the independence thus bestowed, and certain to remove his more tender years from a scene of constant contagion. Thus melancholy and thoughtful, Godolphin repaired to the house of the now famous, the now admired Miss Millinger.

Fanny received the good news of his fortune with a smile, and the bad news of his departure from England with a tear. There are some attachments, of which we so easily sound the depth that the one never thinks of exacting from the other the sacrifices that seem inevitable to more earnest affections. Fanny never dreamed of leaving her theatrical career and ac-

companying Godolphin; Godolphin never dreamed of demanding it. These are the connexions of the great world: my good reader, learn the great world as you look at them!

All was soon settled. Godolphin was easily disembarrassed of his commission. Six hundred a year from his fortune was allowed him during his minority. On this he might well play a decorous part, not, indeed, as the English seigneur, but as the citizen of the world. At the age of little more than sixteen, but with a character which premature independence had half formed and also half enervated, the young Godolphin saw the shores of England recede before him, and felt himself alone in the universe—the lord of his own fate.

CHAPTER X.

THE EDUCATION OF CONSTANCE'S MIND.

MEANWHILE, Constance Vernon grew up in womanhood and beauty. All around her contributed to feed that stern remembrance which her father's dying words had bequeathed. Naturally proud, quick, susceptible, she felt slights, often merely incidental, with a deep and brooding resentment. The forlorn and dependant girl could not, indeed, fail to meet with many bitter proofs that her situation was not forgotten by a world in which prosperity and station are the cardinal virtues. Many a loud whisper, many an intentional "aside," reached her haughty ear and coloured her pale cheek. Such accidents increased her early-formed asperity of thought; chilled the gushing flood of her young affections; and sharpened, with a relentless edge, her bitter and caustic hatred to a society she deemed at once insolent and worthless. To a taste intuitively fine and

noble, the essential vulgarities—the fierceness to-day; the cringing to-morrow; the veneration for power; the indifference to virtue, which characterized the framers and rulers of "society"—could not but bring contempt as well as anger; and, amid the brilliant circles to which so many aspirers looked up with hopeless ambition, Constance moved only to ridicule, to loathe, to despise.

So strong, so constantly nourished was this sentiment of contempt, that it lasted with equal bitterness when Constance afterward became the queen and presider over that great world in which she now shone—to dazzle, but not to rule. What at first might have seemed an exaggerated and insane prayer on the part of the father, grew, as her experience ripened, a natural and laudable command. She was thrown entirely with that party amid whom were his early friends and his late deserters. She resolved to humble the crested arrogance around her, as much from her own desire as from the wish to obey and revenge her father. From contempt for rank rose naturally the ambition of rank. The young beauty resolved to banish love from her heart; to devote herself to one aim and object; to win title and station, that she might be able to give power and permanence to her disdain of those qualities in others; and in the secrecy of night she repeated the vow which consoled her father's deathbed, and solemnly resolved to crush love within her heart, and marry solely for station and for power.

As the daughter of so celebrated a politician, it was natural that Constance should take interest in politics. She lent to every discussion of state events an eager and thirsty ear. She embraced with masculine ardour such sentiments as were then considered the extreme of liberality; and she looked on that career which society limits to *man* as the noblest, the loftiest in the world. She secretly cursed her lot that she was a woman, and prevented from personally carrying into effect the sentiments she passionately espoused. Meanwhile, she did not neglect, or suffer to rust, the bright

weapon of a wit which imbodied, at times, all the biting energies of her contempt. To insolence she retorted sarcasm; and, early able to see that society, like virtue, must be trampled upon in order to yield forth its incense, she rose into respect by the *hauteur* of her manner, the bluntness of her satire, the independence of her mind, far more than by her various accomplishments and her unrivalled beauty.

Of Lady Erpingham she had nothing to complain; kind, easy, *insouciante*, and characterless, her protectress sometimes wounded her by carelessness, but never through design; on the contrary, the countess at once loved and admired her, and was as anxious that her *protégée* should form a brilliant alliance as if she had been her own daughter. Constance therefore loved Lady Erpingham with sincere and earnest warmth, and endeavoured to forget all the commonplaces and littlenesses of character which made up the mind of her protectress, and which otherwise would have been precisely of that nature to which one like Constance would have been the least indulgent.

CHAPTER XI.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN LADY ERPINGHAM AND CONSTANCE. — FARTHER PARTICULARS OF GODOLPHIN'S FAMILY, ETC.

Lady Erpingham was a widow; her jointure, for she had been an heiress and a duke's daughter, was large; and the noblest mansion of all the various seats possessed by the wealthy and powerful house of Erpingham had been allotted by her late lord for her widowed residence. Thither she went punctually on the first of every August, and quitted it punctually on the eighth of every January.

It was some years after the date of Godolphin's departure from England, and the summer following the spring in which Constance had been "brought out;" and after a *début* of such splendour that at this day (many years subsequent to that period) the sensation she created is not only a matter of remembrance but of conversation, Constance, despite the triumph of her vanity, was not displeased to seek some refuge, even from admiration, among the shades of Wendover Castle.

"When," said she one morning, as she was walking with Lady Erpingham upon a terrace beneath the windows of the castle, which overlooked the country for miles, "when will you go with me, dear Lady Erpingham, to see those ruins, of which I have heard so much and so often, and which I have never been able to persuade you to visit? Look! the day is so clear that we can see their outline now—there, to the right of that church! They cannot be so very far from Wendover."

"Godolphin Priory is about twelve miles off," said Lady Erpingham; "but it may seem nearer, for it is situated on the highest spot of the county. Poor Arthur Godolphin! he is lately dead!" Lady Erpingham sighed.

"I never heard you speak of him before."

"There might be a reason for my silence, Constance. He was the person, of all whom I ever saw, who appeared to me, when I was your age, the most fascinating. Not, Constance, that I was in love with him, or that he gave me any reason to become so through gratitude for any affection on his part. It was a girl's fancy, idle and short-lived—nothing more!"

"And the young Godolphin—the boy who, at so early an age, has made himself known for his eccentric life abroad?"

"Is his son; the present owner of those ruins, and, I fear, of little more, unless it be the remains of a legacy received from a relation."

"Was the father extravagant, then?"

"Not he! But *his* father had exceeded a patrimony greatly involved, and greatly reduced from its ancient

importance. All the lands we see yonder—those villages, those woods—once belonged to the Godolphins. They were the most ancient and the most powerful family in this part of England; but the estates dwindled away with each successive generation; and when Arthur Godolphin, *my* Godolphin, succeeded to the property, nothing was left for him but the choice of three evils—a profession, obscurity, or a wealthy marriage. My father, who had long destined me for Lord Erpingham, insinuated that it was in me that Mr. Godolphin wished to find the resource I have last mentioned, and that in such resource was my only attraction in his eyes. I have some reason to believe he proposed to the duke; but he was silent to me, from whom, girl as I was, he might have been less certain of refusal."

"What did he at last?"

"Married a lady who was supposed to be an heiress; but he had scarcely enjoyed her fortune a year before it became the subject of a lawsuit. He lost the cause and the dowry; and, what was worse, the expenses of litigation, and the sums he was obliged to refund, reduced him to what, for a man of his rank, might be considered absolute poverty. He was thoroughly chagrined and soured by this event; retired to those ruins, or, rather, to the small cottage that adjoins them, and there lived to the day of his death, shunning society, and certainly not exceeding his income."

"I understand you: he became parsimonious."

"To the excess which his neighbours called miserly."

"And his wife?"

"Poor woman! she was a mere fine lady, and died, I believe, of the same vexation which nipped, not the life, but the heart of her husband."

"Had they only one son?"

"Only the present owner: Percy, I think—yes, Percy; it was his mother's surname—Percy Godolphin."

"And how came this poor boy to be thrown so early on the world? Did he quarrel with Mr. Godolphin."

"I believe not: but, when Percy was about fifteen, he

left the obscure school at which he was educated, and resided for some little time with a relation, Augustus Saville. He stayed with him in London for about a year, and went everywhere with him, though so mere a boy. His manners were, I well remember, assured and formed. A relation left him some moderate legacy, and afterward he went abroad alone."

"But the ruins! The late Mr. Godolphin, notwithstanding his reserve, did not object to indulging the curiosity of his neighbours?"

"No! he was proud of the interest the ruins of his hereditary mansion so generally excited—proud of their celebrity in print-shops and in tours; but he himself was never seen. The cottage in which he lived, though it adjoins the ruins, was, of course, sacred from intrusion, and is so walled in that that great delight of English visiters at show-places—peeping-in at windows—was utterly forbidden. However that be, during Mr. Godolphin's life I never had courage to visit what, to me, would have been a melancholy scene: now the pain would be somewhat less; and, since you wish it, suppose we drive over and visit the ruins to-morrow. It is the regular day for seeing them, by-the-by."

"Not, dear Lady Erpingham, if it give you the least—"

"My sweet girl," interrupted Lady Erpingham, when a servant approached to announce visiters at the castle.

"Will you go into the saloon, Constance?" said the elder lady, as, thinking still of love and Arthur Godolphin, she took her way to her dressing-room to renovate her rouge.

It would have been a pretty amusement to one of the lesser devils, if, during the early romance of Lady Erpingham's feelings towards Arthur Godolphin, he had foretold her the hour when she would tell how Arthur Godolphin died a miser—just five minutes before she repaired to the toilet to decorate the cheek of age for the heedless eyes of a common acquaintance. 'Tis the world's way! For my part, I would undertake to find a better world in that rookery opposite my windows.

CHAPTER XII.

DESCRIPTION OF GODOLPHIN'S HOUSE.—THE FIRST INTERVIEW.—ITS EFFECT ON CONSTANCE.

"But," asked Constance, as the next day Lady Erpingham and herself were performing the appointed pilgrimage to the ruins of Godolphin Priory, "if the late Mr. Godolphin, as he grew in years, acquired a turn of mind so penurious, was he not enabled to leave his son some addition to the *pied de terre* we are about to visit?"

"He must certainly have left some ready money," answered Lady Erpingham. "But is it, after all, likely that so young a man as Percy Godolphin could have lived in the manner he has done without incurring debts? It is most probable that he had some recourse to those persons so willing to encourage the young and extravagant, and that repayment to them will more than swallow up any savings his father might have amassed."

"True enough!" said Constance; and the conversation glided into remarks on avaricious fathers and prodigal sons. Constance was witty on the subject, and Lady Erpingham laughed herself into excellent humour.

It was considerably past noon when they arrived at the ruins. The carriage stopped before a small inn at the entrance of a dismantled park; and, taking advantage of the beauty of the day, Lady Erpingham and Constance walked slowly towards the remains of the Priory.

The scene, as they approached, was wild and picturesque in the extreme. A wide and glassy lake lay stretched beneath them: on the opposite side stood the ruins. The large oriel window—the Gothic arch—the

broken, yet still majestic column, all imbrowned and mossed with age, were still spared, and now mirrored themselves in the waveless and silent tide. Fragments of stone lay around for some considerable distance, and the whole was backed by hills, covered with gloomy and thick woods of larch and fir. To the left they saw the stream which fed the lake, stealing away through grassy banks overgrown with the willow and pollard oak: and there, from one or two cottages, only caught in glimpses, thin wreaths of smoke rose in spires against the clear sky. To the right the ground was broken into a thousand glens and hollows: the deer-loved fern, the golden broom, were scattered about profusely; and here and there were dense groves of pollards; or, at very rare intervals, some single tree decaying (for all round bore the seal of vassalage to Time), but mighty, and greenly venerable in its decay.

As they passed over a bridge that, on either side of the stream, emerged, as it were, from a thick copse, they caught a view of the small abode that adjoined the ruins. It seemed covered entirely with ivy; and, so far from diminishing, tended rather to increase the romantic and imposing effect of the crumbling pile from which it grew.

They opened a little gate at the other extremity of the bridge, and in a few minutes more they stood at the entrance to the Priory.

It was an oak door studded with nails. The jessamine grew upon either side; and, to descend to a commonplace matter, they had some difficulty in finding the bell among the leaves in which it was imbedded. When they had found and touched it, its clear and lively sound rang out in that still and lovely, though desolate spot, with an effect startling and impressive from its contrast. There is something very fairy-like in the cheerful voice of a bell sounding among the wilder scenes of nature, particularly where Time advances his claim to the sovereignty of the landscape; for the cheerfulness is a little ghostly, and might serve well enough for a tocsin to the elvish hordes whom our footsteps may be supposed to disturb.

An old woman, in the neat peasant dress of our country, when, taking a little from the fashion of the last century (the cap and the kerchief), it assumes no ungraceful costume, replied to their summons. She was the solitary cicerone of the place. She had lived there, a lone and childless widow, for thirty years; and, of all the persons I have ever seen, would furnish forth the best heroine to one of those pictures of homely life which Wordsworth has dignified with the patriarchal tenderness of his genius.

They wound a narrow passage, and came to the ruins of the great hall. Its Gothic arches still sprang lightly upward on either side; and, opening a large stone box that stood in a recess, the old woman showed them the gloves, and the helmet, and the tattered banners which had belonged to that Godolphin who had fought side by side with Sidney, when he, whose life—as the noblest of British lyrists hath somewhere said—was "poetry put into action,"* received his death-wound in the field of Zutphen.

Thence they ascended, by the dilapidated and crumbling staircase, to a small room, in which the visiters were always expected to rest themselves, and enjoy the scene in the garden below. A large chasm yawned where the casement once was, and round this aperture the ivy wreathed itself in fantastic luxuriance. A sort of ladder, suspended from this chasm to the ground, afforded a convenience for those who were tempted to a short excursion by the view without.

And the view *was* tempting! A smooth green lawn, surrounded by shrubs and flowers, was ornamented in the centre by a fountain. The waters were, it is true, dried up; but the basin, and the "Triton with his wreathed shell," still remained. A little to the right was an old monkish sundial; and through the green vista you caught the glimpse of one of those gray, grotesque statues with which the taste of Elizabeth's day shamed the classic chisel.

There was something quiet and venerable about the

* Campbell.

whole place; and when the old woman said to Constance, "Would not you like, my lady, to walk down and look at the sundial and the fountain?" Constance felt she required nothing more to yield to her inclination. Lady Erpingham, less adventurous, remained in the ruined chamber; and the old woman, naturally enough, honoured the elder lady with her company.

Constance therefore descended the rude steps alone. As she paused by the fountain, an indescribable and delicious feeling of repose stole over a mind that seldom experienced any sentiment so natural or so soft. The hour, the stillness, the scene, all conspired to lull the heart into that dreaming and half-unconscious revery in which poets would suppose the hermits of elder times to have wasted a life, indolent, and yet scarcely, after all, unwise. "Methinks," she inly soliloquized, "while I look around, I feel as if I could give up my objects of life; renounce my hopes; forget to be artificial and ambitious; live in these ruins, and" (whispered the spirit within), "loved and loving, fulfil the ordinary doom of woman."

Indulging a mood, the proud and restless Constance, who despised love as the poorest of human weaknesses, though easily susceptible to all other species of romance, had scarcely ever even known before, she wandered away from the lawn into one of the alleys cut amid the grove around. Caught by the murmur of an unseen brook, she tracked it through the trees, as its sound grew louder and louder on her ear, till at length it stole upon her sight. The sun, only winning through the trees at intervals, played capriciously upon its cold and dark waters as they glided on, and gave to her, as the same effect has done to a thousand poets, ample matter for a simile or a moral.

She approached the brook, and came unawares upon the figure of a young man, leaning against a stunted tree that overhung the waters, and occupied with the idle amusement of dropping pebbles in the stream. She saw only his profile; but that view is, in a fine countenance, almost always the most striking and im-

pressive, and it was eminently so in the face before her. The stranger, who was scarcely removed from boyhood, was dressed in deep mourning. He seemed slight and small of stature. A travelling cap of sables contrasted, not hid, light brown hair of singular richness and beauty. His features were of that pure and severe Greek, of which the only fault is, that in the very perfection of the chiselling of the features there seems something hard and stern. The complexion was pale even to wanness; and the whole cast and contour of the head were full of intellect, and betokening that absorption of mind which cannot be marked in any one without exciting a certain vague curiosity and interest.

So dark and wondrous are the workings of our nature, that there are scarcely any of us, however light and unthinking, who would not be arrested by the countenance of one in deep reflection; who would not pause, and long to pierce into the mysteries that were agitating that world, most illimitable by nature, but often most narrowed by custom—the world within.

And this interest, powerful as it is, spelled and arrested Constance at once. She remained for a minute gazing on the countenance of the young stranger, and then she—the most self-possessed and stately of human creatures—blushing deeply, and confused though unseen, turned lightly away, and stopped not on her road till she regained the old chamber and Lady Erpingham.

The old woman was descanting upon the merits of the late lord of Godolphin Priory.

"For, though they called him close, and so forth, my lady, yet he was generous to others; it was only himself he pinched. But, to be sure, the present squire won't take after him there."

"Has Mr. Percy Godolphin been here lately?" asked Lady Erpingham.

"He is at the cottage now, my lady," replied the old woman. "He came two days ago."

"Is he like his father?"

"Oh! not near so fine-looking a gentleman! much smaller, and quite pale-like. He seems sickly: them foreign parts do nobody no good. He was as fine a lad at fifteen years old as ever I seed; but now he is not like the same thing."

So, then, it was evidently Percy Godolphin whom Constance had seen by the brook—the owner of a home without coffers, and estates without a rent-roll—the Percy Godolphin of whom, before he had yet attained the age when others have left the college, or even the school, every one had learned to speak—some favourably, all with eagerness. Constance felt a vague interest respecting him spring up in her mind: she checked it, for it was a sin in her eyes to think with interest on a man neither rich nor powerful; and, as she quitted the ruins with Lady Erpingham, she communicated to the latter her adventure. She was, however, disingenuous; for, though Godolphin's countenance was exactly of that cast which Constance most admired, she described him just as the old woman had done; and Lady Erpingham figured to herself, from the description, a little yellow man, with white hair and a turned-up nose. Oh Truth! what a hard path is thine! Does any keep it for three inches together in the commonest trifle? and yet two sides of my library are filled with histories!

CHAPTER XIII.

A BALL ANNOUNCED.—GODOLPHIN'S VISIT TO WENDOVER CASTLE.—HIS MANNERS AND CONVERSATION.

Lady Erpingham (besides her daughter, Lady Eleanor, married to Mr. Clare, a county member of large fortune) was blessed with one son.

The present earl had been for the last two years

abroad. He had never, since his accession to his title, visited Wendover Castle; and Lady Erpingham one morning experienced the delight of receiving a letter from him, dated Dover, and signifying his intention of paying her a visit. In honour of this event, Lady Erpingham resolved to give a grand ball. Cards were issued to all the families in the county, and, among others, to Mr. Godolphin.

On the third day after this invitation had been sent to the person I have last named, as Lady Erpingham and Constance were alone in the saloon, Mr. Percy Godolphin was announced. Constance blushed as she looked up, and Lady Erpingham was struck by the nobleness of his address, and the perfect self-possession of his manner. And yet nothing could be so different as was his deportment from that which she had been accustomed to admire—from that manifested by the exquisites of the day. The calm, the nonchalance, the artificial smile of languor, the evenness, so insipid, yet so irreproachable, of English manners when considered most polished—all this was the reverse of Godolphin's address and air. In short, in all he said or did, there was something foreign, something unfamiliar. He was abrupt and enthusiastic in conversation, and used gestures in speaking. His countenance lighted up at every word that broke from him on the graver subjects of discussion. You felt, indeed, with him, that you were with a man of genius—a wayward and a spoiled man, who had acquired his habits in solitude, though his graces in the world.

They conversed about the ruins of the Priory, and Constance expressed her admiration of their romantic and picturesque beauty. "Ah!" said he, smiling, but with a slight blush, in which Constance detected something of pain, "I heard of your visit to my poor heaps of stone. My father took great pleasure in the notice they attracted. When a proud man has not riches to be proud of, he grows proud of the signs of his poverty itself. This was the case with my poor father. Had he been rich, the ruins would not have existed;

he would have rebuilt the old mansion. As he was poor, he valued himself on their existence, and fancied magnificence in every handful of moss. But all life is delusion: all pride, all vanity, all pomp, are equally deceit. Like the Spanish hidalgo, we put on spectacles when we eat our cherries, in order that they may seem ten times as big as they are!"

Constance smiled; and Lady Erpingham, who had more kindness than delicacy, continued her praises of the Priory and the scenery round it.

"The old park," said she, "with its wood and water, is so beautiful! It wants nothing but a few deer, just tame enough to come near the ruins, and wild enough to start away as you approach."

"Now you would borrow an attraction from wealth," said Godolphin, who, unlike English persons in general, seemed to love alluding to his poverty: "it is not for the owner of a ruined Priory to consult the aristocratic enhancements of that costly luxury, the picturesque. Alas! I have not even wherewithal to feed a few solitary partridges; and I hear that, if I go beyond the green turf once a park, I shall be warned off forthwith, and my very qualification disputed."

"Are you fond of shooting?" said Lady Erpingham.

"I fancy I should be; but I have never enjoyed the sport in England."

"Do pray come, then," said Lady Erpingham, kindly, "and spend your first week in September here. Let me see: the first of the month will be next Thursday; dine with us on Wednesday. We have keepers and dogs here enough, thanks to Robert; so you need only bring your gun."

"You are very kind, dear Lady Erpingham," said Godolphin, warmly; "I accept your invitation at once."

"Your father was a very old friend of mine," said the lady, with a sigh.

"He was an old admirer," said the gentleman, with a bow.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN GODOLPHIN AND CONSTANCE.—THE COUNTRY LIFE AND THE TOWN LIFE.

And Godolphin came on the appointed Wednesday. He was animated that day even to brilliancy. Lady Erpingham thought him the most charming of men, and even Constance forgot that he was no match for herself. Gifted and cultivated as she was, it was not without delight that she listened to his glowing descriptions of scenery, and to his playful yet somewhat melancholy strain of irony upon men and their pursuits. The peculiar features of her mind made her, indeed, like the latter more than she could appreciate the former; for in her nature there was more bitterness than sentiment. Still his rich language and fluent periods, even in description, touched her ear and fancy, though they sank not to her heart; and she yielded insensibly to the spells she would almost have despised in another.

The next day, Constance, who was no very early riser, tempted by the beauty of the noon, strolled into the gardens. She was surprised to hear Godolphin's voice behind her; she turned round, and he joined her.

"I thought you were on your shooting expedition?"

"I *have* been shooting, and I am returned. I was out by daybreak, and I came back at noon, in the hope of being allowed to join you in your ride or walk."

Constance smilingly acknowledged the compliment; and, as they passed up the straight walks of the old-fashioned and stately gardens, Godolphin turned the conversation upon the varieties of garden scenery; upon the poets who have described those varieties best; upon that difference between the town life and the country, on which the brothers of the minstrel craft have, in all ages, so glowingly insisted. In this

conversation, certain points of contrast between the characters of these two young persons might be observed.

"I confess to you," said Godolphin, "that I have little faith in the permanence of any attachment professed for the country by the inhabitants of cities. If we can occupy our minds solely with the objects around us—if the brook, and the old tree, and the golden sunset, and the summer night, and the animal and homely life that we survey—if these can fill our contemplation, and take away from us the feverish schemes of the future—*then* indeed I can fully understand the reality of that tranquil and happy state which our elder poets have described as incident to a country life. But if we carry with us to the shade all the restless and perturbed desires of the city—if we only employ present leisure in schemes for an agitated future—then it is in vain that we affect the hermit and fly to the retreat. The moment the novelty of green fields is over and our projects are formed, we wish to hurry to the city to execute them. We have, in a word, made our retirement only a nursery for schemes now springing up and requiring to be transplanted."

"You are right," said Constance, quickly; "and who would pass life as if it were a dream? It seems to me that we put retirement to the right use when we make it only subservient to our aims in the world."

"A strange doctrine for a young beauty," thought Godolphin, "whose head ought to be full of groves and love. Then," said he aloud, "I must rank among those who abuse the purposes of retirement; for I have hitherto been flattered to think that I enjoy it for itself. Despite the artificial life I have led, everything that speaks of nature has a voice that I can rarely resist. What feelings created in a city can compare with those that rise so gently and so unbidden within us when the trees and the waters are our only companions—our only sources of excitement and intoxication? Is not contemplation better than ambition?"

"Can you believe it?" said Constance, incredulously.

"I do."

Constance smiled; and there would have been contempt in that beautiful smile, had not Godolphin interested her in spite of herself.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FEELINGS OF CONSTANCE AND GODOLPHIN TOWARDS EACH OTHER.—THE DISTINCTION IN THEIR CHARACTERS.—REMARKS ON THE EFFECTS PRODUCED BY THE WORLD UPON GODOLPHIN.—THE RIDE.—RURAL DESCRIPTIONS.—OMENS.—THE FIRST INDISTINCT CONFESSION.

Every day, at the hour in which Constance was visible, Godolphin had loaded the keeper, and had returned to attend upon her movements. They walked and rode together; and in the evening Godolphin hung over her chair and listened to her songs; for though, as I have before said, she had but little science in instrumental music, her voice was rich and soft beyond the pathos of ordinary singers.

Lady Erpingham saw what she believed a growing attachment with secret delight. She loved Constance for herself, and Godolphin for his father's memory. She thought again and again what a charming couple they would make—so handsome—so gifted: and if Prudence whispered also—so poor, the kind countess remembered that she herself had saved from her ample jointure a sum which she had always designed as a dowry for Constance, and which, should Godolphin be the bridegroom, she felt she should have a tenfold pleasure in bestowing. With this fortune, which would place them, at least, in independence, she united in her kindly imagination the importance which she imagined Godolphin's talents must ultimately acquire;

and for which, in her aristocratic estimation, she conceived the Senate the only legitimate sphere. She said, she hinted nothing to Constance; but she suffered nature, youth, and companionship to exercise their sway.

And the complexion of Godolphin's feelings for Constance Vernon did indeed resemble love—was love itself, though rather love in its romance than its reality. What were those of Constance for him? She knew not herself at that time. Had she been of a character one shade less ambitious or less powerful, they would have been love, and love of no common character. But within her musing, and self-possessed, and singularly constituted mind, there was, as yet, a limit to every sentiment, a chain to the wings of every thought, save those of one order; and that order was not of love. There was a marked difference, in all respects, between the characters of the two; and it was singular enough that that of the woman was the less romantic, and composed of the simpler materials.

A volume of Wordsworth's most exquisite poetry had then just appeared. "Is not this wonderful?" said Godolphin, reciting some of those lofty, but refining and subtle thoughts which characterize the most pastoral yet the most intellectual of all modern poets.

Constance shook her head.

"What! you do not admire it?"

"I do not understand it."

"What poetry do you admire."

"This."

It was Pope's translation of the "Iliad."

"Yes, yes, to be sure," said Godolphin, a little vexed; "we all admire this in its way: but what else?"

Constance pointed to a passage in the "Palamon and Arcite" of Dryden.

Godolphin threw down his Wordsworth. "You take an ungenerous advantage of me," said he. "Tell me something you admire, which, at least, I may have the privilege of disputing—something that you think generally neglected."

"I admire few things that are generally neglected,"

answered Constance, with her bright and proud smile. "Fame gives its stamp to all metal that is of intrinsic value."

This answer was quite characteristic of Constance: she worshipped fame far more than the genius which won it.

"Well, then," said Godolphin, "let us see *now* if we can come to a compromise of sentiment;" and he took up the "Comus" of Milton.

No one read poetry so beautifully: his voice was so deep and flexible, and his countenance answered so well to every modulation of his voice. Constance was touched by the reader, but not by the verse. Godolphin had great penetration; he perceived it, and turned to the speeches of Satan in "Paradise Lost." The noble countenance before him grew luminous at once: the lip quivered, the eye sparkled; the enthusiasm of Godolphin was not comparable to that of Constance. The fact was, that the broad and common emotions of the intellectual character struck upon the right key. Courage, defiance, ambition, these she comprehended to their fullest extent; but the rich subtleties of thought which mark the cold and bright page of the "Comus"—the noble Platonism—the high and rare love for what is abstractedly good, these were not "sonorous and trumpet-speaking" enough for the heart of one meant by Nature for a heroine or a queen, not a poetess or a philosopher.

But all that in literature was delicate, and half seen, and abstruse, had its peculiar charm for Godolphin. Of a reflective and refining mind, he had early learned to despise the common emotions of men: glory touched him not, and to ambition he had shut his heart. Love with him—even though he had been deemed, nor unjustly, a man of gallantry and pleasure—love was not compounded of the ordinary elements of the passions. Full of dreams, and refinements, and intense abstractions, it was a love that seemed not homely enough for endurance, and of too rare a nature to hope for sympathy in return.

And so it was in his intercourse with Constance; both were continually disappointed. "You do not feel this," said Constance. "She cannot understand me," sighed Godolphin.

But we must not suppose—despite his refinements, and his reveries, and his love for the intellectual and the pure—that Godolphin was of a stainless character or mind. He was one who, naturally full of decided and marked qualities, was, by the peculiar elements of our society, rendered a doubtful, motley, and indistinct character, tinctured by the frailties that leave us in a wavering state between vice and virtue. The energies that had marked his boyhood were dulled and crippled in the indolent life of the world. His wandering habits for the last few years—the soft and poetical existence of the South—had fed his natural romance, and nourished that passion for contemplation which the intellectual man of pleasure so commonly forms; for pleasure has a philosophy of its own—a sad, a fanciful, yet deep persuasion of the vanity of all things—a craving after the bright ideal—

"The desire of the moth for the star."

Solomon's thirst for pleasure was the companion of his wisdom: satiety was the offspring of the one, discontent of the other. But this philosophy, though seductive, is of no wholesome or useful character: it is the philosophy of feelings, not principles—of the heart, not the head. So with Godolphin: he was too refined in his moralizing to cling to what was moral. The simply good and the simply bad he left for us plain folks to discover. In politics he was a Tory, in theology a Transcendental. He was unattracted by the doctrines of Socrates or Bentham, because they will serve for all men; but he had some obscure and shadowy standard in his own mind by which he compared the actions of others. He had imagination, genius, even heart; was brilliant always, sometimes profound; graceful in society, yet seldom social: a lonely man, yet a man of

the world; generous to individuals, selfish to the mass. How many fine qualities worse than thrown away!

Who will not allow that he has met many such men? and who will not follow this man to his end?

One day (it was the last of Godolphin's protracted visit), as the sun was waning to its close, and the time was unusually soft and tranquil, Constance and Godolphin were returning slowly home from their customary ride. They passed by a small inn, bearing the common sign of the "Checkers," round which a crowd of peasants were assembled, listening to the rude music which a wandering Italian boy drew from his guitar. The scene was rustic and picturesque; and, as Godolphin reined in his horse and gazed on the group, he little dreamed of the fierce and dark emotions with which, at a far distant period, he was destined to revisit that spot.

"Our peasants," said he, as they rode on, "require some humanizing relaxation like that we have witnessed. The music and the morris-dance have gone from England; and instead of providing, as formerly, for the amusement of the grinded labourer, our aristocracy now regard with the most watchful jealousy his most distant approach to festivity. They cannot bear the rustic to be merry: disorder and amusement are words for the same offence."

"Oh, that aristocracy!" said Constance, bitterly; "so mean, so sordid, so insolent! the day must come when we shall see it morally trampled down. It has lived without dignity, it will fall without valour. At present, how startlingly hollow is its real power! It has no vassals, no armed force. To-day opinion supports it: if to-morrow opinion veer round, to-morrow it is weaker than an infant. It is the puppet, the weathercock of every accident!"

"Your sentiments surprise me," said Godolphin, who was, in truth, somewhat startled. "Is this from the courtly and courted Miss Vernon?"

"Believe me," said Constance, with quickness, "it is among the aristocracy themselves that their bitterest

contemners are found. Those who suffer under the system every day are more likely to loathe it than the mass, who seldom palpably come in contact with it. Its constant meanness is more sickening than its occasional violence."

Godolphin smiled. "You take the course of the world less smoothly than I do," said he, avoiding the chance (as gentlemen are apt to do with ladies) of a political dispute. "I perceive that small things fret you; I laugh at them. I can be offended, but not galled. No man has it in his power to mortify me. You have scorn for fools, I only indifference. You waste too much feeling upon stones and straws."

Thus talking, they passed a shallow ford in the stream. "We are not far from the Priory," said Godolphin, pointing to its ruins, that rose grayly in the evening skies from the green woods around it.

Constance sighed involuntarily. She felt pain in being reminded of the slender fortunes of her companion. Ascending the gentle hill that swelled from the stream, she now, to turn the current of her thoughts, pointed admiringly to the blue course of the waters, as they wound through their shagged banks. And deep, dark, rushing, even in that still hour, went the stream through the boughs that swept over its surface. Here and there the banks suddenly shelved down, mingling with the waves; then abruptly they rose, overspread with thick and tangled umbrage, several feet above the level of the river.

"How strange it is," said Godolphin, "that at times a feeling comes over us, as we gaze upon certain places, which associates the scene either with some dim-remembered and dreamlike images of the past, or with a prophetic and fearful omen of the future. As I gaze now upon that spot, those banks, that whirling river, it seems as if my destiny claimed a mysterious sympathy with the scene: when—how—wherefore I know not, guess not: only this shadowy and chilling sentiment unaccountably creeps over me. Every one has known a similar strange, indistinct feeling at certain

times and places, and with a similar inability to trace the cause. And yet, is it not singular, that in poetry, which wears most feelings to an echo, I have never met with any attempt to describe it?"

"Because poetry," said Constance, "is, after all, but a hackneyed imitation of the most common thoughts, giving them merely a gloss by the brilliancy of verse. And yet how little poets *know!* They *imagine* and they *imitate:* behold all their secrets!"

"Perhaps you are right," said Godolphin, musingly; "and I, who have often vainly fancied I had the poetical temperament, have been so chilled and sickened by the characteristics of the tribe, that I have checked its impulses with a sort of disdain; and thus the Ideal, having no vent in me, preys within, creating a thousand undefined dreams and unwilling superstitions, making me enamoured of the shadowy and unknown, and dissatisfying me with the petty ambitions of the world."

"You will awake hereafter," said Constance, earnestly.

Godolphin shook his head and replied not.

Their way now lay along a green lane that gradually wound round a hill commanding a view of great richness and beauty. Cottages, and spires, and groves gave life, but it was a scattered and remote life, to the scene; and the broad stream, whose waves, softened in the distance, did not seem to break the even surface of the tide, flowed onward, glowing in the sunlight, till it was lost among dark and luxuriant woods.

Both once more arrested their horses by a common impulse, and both became suddenly silent as they gazed. Godolphin was the first to speak: it brought to his memory a scene in that delicious land, whose Southern loveliness Claude has transfused to the canvass and De Staël to the page. With his own impassioned language, he spoke to Constance of that scene and that country. Every tree before him furnished matter for his illustration or his contrast; and Constance, as she heard that magic voice, and speaking, too, of a country dedicated to love—Constance listened with

glistening eyes, and a cheek which he—consummate master of the secrets of womanhood—perceived was eloquent with thoughts which *she* knew not, but which *he* interpreted to the letter.

"And in such a spot," said he, continuing and fixing his deep and animated gaze on her, "in such a spot I could have stayed for ever but for one recollection, one feeling—*I should have been too much alone!* In a wild, or a grand, or even a barren country, we may live in solitude, and find fit food for thought; but not in one so soft, so subduing as that which I saw and see. Love comes over us then in spite of ourselves; and I feel—I feel now"—his voice trembled as he spoke—"that any secret we may before have nursed, though hitherto unacknowledged, makes itself at length a voice. We are oppressed with the desire to be loved; we long for the courage to say we love."

Never before had Godolphin, though constantly verging into sentiment, spoken to Constance in so plain a language. Eye, voice, cheek—*all* spoke. She felt that he had confessed he loved her! And was she not happy? She was: it was her happiest moment. But, in that sort of vague and indistinct shrinking from the subject with which a woman who loves hears a disclosure of love from him on whose lips it is most sweet, she muttered some confused attempt to change the subject, and quickened her horse's pace. Godolphin did not attempt to renew the topic so interesting and so dangerous; only, as with the winding of the road the landscape gradually faded from their view, he said, in a low voice, as if to himself, "How long, how fondly shall I remember this day!"

CHAPTER XVI.

GODOLPHIN'S RETURN HOME.—HIS SOLILOQUY.—LORD ERPINGHAM'S ARRIVAL AT WENDOVER CASTLE.—THE EARL DESCRIBED.—HIS ACCOUNT OF GODOLPHIN'S LIFE AT ROME.

With a listless step Godolphin re-entered the threshold of his cottage-home. He passed into a small chamber, which was yet the largest in his house. The poor and scanty furniture scattered around; the old, tuneless, broken harpsichord; the worn and tattered carpet; the tenantless birdcage in the recess by the window; the book-shelves, containing some dozens of worthless volumes; the sofa of the last century (when, if people knew comfort, they placed it not in lounging), small, narrow, high-backed, hard, and knotted: these, just as his father had left, just as his boyhood had seen them, greeted him with a comfortless and chill, though familiar welcome. It was evening: he ordered a fire and lights; and, leaning his face on his hand as he contemplated the fitful and dusky upbreakings of the flame through the bars of the niggard and contracted grate, he sat himself down to hold commune with his heart.

"So I love this woman," said he, "do I? Have I not deceived myself? She is poor—no connexion; she has nothing whereby to reinstate my house's fortunes, to rebuild this mansion, or repurchase yonder demesnes. I love her! *I*, who have known the value of her sex so well, that I have said, again and again, I would not shackle life with a princess! Love may withstand possession—true—but not time. In three years there would be no glory in the face of Constance, and I should be—what? My fortunes, broken as they are, can support *me* alone, and with my few wants.

But if married! the haughty Constance my wife! Nay, nay, nay! this must not be thought of! I, the hero of Paris! the pupil of Saville! I, to be so beguiled as even to *dream* of such a madness!

"Yet I have that within me that might make a stir in the world—I might rise. Professions are open; the Diplomacy, the House of Commons. What! Percy Godolphin be ass enough to grow ambitious! to toil, to fret, to slave, to answer fools on a first principle, and die at length of a broken heart or a lost place! Pooh, pooh! I, who despise your prime ministers, can scarcely stoop to their apprenticeship. Life is too short for toil. And what do men strive for?—to enjoy: but why not enjoy without the toil? And relinquish Constance? Ay, it is but one woman lost!"

So ended the soliloquy of a man scarcely of age. The world teaches us its last lessons betimes; but then, lest we should have nothing left to acquire from its wisdom, it employs the rest of our life in unlearning all that it first taught.

Meanwhile, the time approached when Lord Erpingham was to arrive at Wendover Castle, and at length came the day itself. Naturally anxious to enjoy as exclusively as possible the company of her son the first day of his return from so long an absence, Lady Erpingham had asked no one to meet him. The earl's heavy travelling-carriage at length rolled clattering up the courtyard, and in a few minutes a tall man, in the prime of life, and borrowing some favourable effect as to person from the large cloak of velvet and furs which hung round him, entered the room, and Lady Erpingham embraced her son. The kind and familiar manner with which he answered her inquiries and congratulations was somewhat changed when he suddenly perceived Constance. Lord Erpingham was a cold man, and, like most cold men, ashamed of the evidence of affection. He greeted Constance very quietly, and, as she thought, slightly: but his eyes turned to her far more often than any friend of Lord Erpingham's might ever have remarked those large, round, hazel eyes turn to any one before.

When the earl withdrew to adjust his toilet for dinner, Lady Erpingham, as she wiped her eyes, could not help exclaiming to Constance, "Is he not handsome? What a figure!"

Constance was a little addicted to flattery where she liked the one to be flattered, and she assented readily enough to the maternal remark. Hitherto, however, she had not observed anything more in Lord Erpingham than his height and his cloak: as he re-entered and led her to the dining-room, she took a better, though still but a casual survey.

Lord Erpingham was of that description of person of which *men* always say, "What a prodigiously fine fellow!" He was above six feet high, stout in proportion: not, indeed, accurately formed, nor graceful in bearing, but quite as much so as a man of six feet high need be. He had a manly complexion of brown, yellow, and red. His whiskers were exceedingly large, black, and well-arranged. His eyes, as I have before said, were round, large, and hazel; they were also unmeaning. His teeth were good; and his nose, neither aquiline nor Grecian, was yet a very showy nose upon the whole. All the maid-servants admired him; and you felt, in looking at him, that it was a pity our army should lose so good a grenadier.

Lord Erpingham was a Whig of the old school: he disliked free trade, but he thought the Tory boroughs ought to be thrown open. He was generally considered a sensible man. He had read Blackstone, Montesquieu, Cowper's Poems, and "The Rambler;" and he was always heard with great attention in the House of Lords. In his moral character he was a *bon vivant*, as far as wine is concerned; for choice *eating* he cared nothing. He was good-natured, but close; brave enough to fight a duel, if necessary; and religious enough to go to church once a week—in the country.

So far Lord Erpingham might seem modelled from one of Sir Walter's heroes; we must reverse the medal, and show the points in which he differed from those patterns of propriety.

Like the generality of his class, he was peculiarly loose in his notions of women, though not ardent in pursuit of them. His amours had been among opera-dancers, "because," as he was wont to say, "there was no d—d bore with *them*;" though he had seen too much of his own world not to know that great ladies seldom value themselves on too fastidious a prudery. Lord Erpingham was always considered a high-minded man. People chose him as an umpire in quarrels; and told a story (that was not true) of his having held some state office for a whole year, and insisted on returning the emoluments!

Such was Robert Lord Erpingham. During dinner, at which he displayed, to his mother's great delight, a most excellent appetite, he listened, as well he might, considering the more legitimate occupation of the time and season, to Lady Erpingham's recitals of county history; her long answers to his brief inquiries whether old friends were dead and young ones married; and his countenance brightened up to an expression of interest—almost of intelligence—when he was told that birds were said to be plentiful.

As the servants left the room and Lord Erpingham took his first glass of claret, the conversation fell upon Percy Godolphin.

"He has been staying with us a whole fortnight," said Lady Erpingham; "and, by-the-by, he said he had met you in Italy, and mentioned your name as it deserved."

"Indeed! And did he really condescend to praise me?" said Lord Erpingham, with eagerness; for there was that about Godolphin, and his reputation for fastidiousness, which gave a rarity and a value to his praise, at least to lordly ears. "Ah! he's a queer fellow: he led a very singular life in Italy.'

"So I have always heard," said Lady Erpingham. "But of what description? was he very wild?"

"No, not exactly: there was a good deal of mystery about him: he saw very few English, and those only men who played high. He was said to have a great deal of learning, and so forth."

"Oh! then he was surrounded, I suppose, by those medallists, and picture-sellers, and other impostors, who live upon such of our countrymen as think themselves blessed with a taste or afflicted with a genius," said Lady Erpingham; who, having lived with the wits and orators of the time, had caught mechanically their way of rounding a period.

"Far from it!" returned the earl. "Godolphin is much too deep a fellow for that: he's not easily taken in, I assure you. I confess I don't like him much the worse for that," added the close noble. "But he lived with the Italian doctors and men of science; and encouraged, in particular, one strange fellow, who affected sorcery, I fancy, or something very like it. Godolphin resided in a very lonely spot at Rome; and I believe laboratories, and caldrons, and all sorts of devilish things, were always at work there—at least, so people said."

"And yet," said Constance, "you thought him too sensible to be easily taken in!"

"Indeed I do, Miss Vernon; and the proof of it is, that no man has less fortune or is more made of. He plays, it is true, but only occasionally; though, as a player at games of skill—piquet, billiards, whist—he has no equal, unless it be Saville. But then Saville, *entre nous*, is suspected of playing unfairly."

"And you are quite sure," said the placid Lady Erpingham, "that Mr. Godolphin is only indebted to skill for his success?"

Constance darted a glance of fire at the speaker.

"Why, faith, I believe so! No one ever accused him of a single shabby or even suspicious trick: and, indeed, as I said before, no one was ever more sought after in society, though he shuns it; and he's devilish right, for it's a cursed bore!"

"My dear Robert! at your age!" exclaimed the mother.

"But," continued the earl, turning to Constance, "but, Miss Vernon, a man may have his weak point; and the cunning Italian may have hit on Godolphin's,

clever as he is in general: though, for my part, I will tell you frankly, I think he only encouraged him to mystify and perplex people, just to get talked of—vanity, in short. He's a good-looking fellow, that Godolphin—eh?" continued the earl, in the tone of a man who meant you to deny what he asserted.

"Oh, beautiful!" said Lady Erpingham. "Such a countenance?"

"Deused pale, though?—eh? and not the best of figures: thin, narrow-shouldered, eh—eh?"

Godolphin's proportions were faultless; but your strapping heroes think of a moderate-sized man as mathematicians define a point—declare that he has no length or breadth whatsoever.

"What say *you*, Constance?" asked Lady Erpingham, meaningly.

Constance felt the meaning, and replied calmly, that Mr. Godolphin appeared to her handsomer than any one she had seen lately.

Lord Erpingham played with his neckcloth, and Lady Erpingham rose to leave the room. "D—d fine girl!" said Erpingham, as he shut the door upon Constance; "but d—d sharp!" added he, as he resettled himself on his chair.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONSTANCE AT HER TOILET.—HER FEELINGS.—HER ORDER OF BEAUTY DESCRIBED.—THE BALL.—THE DUCHESS OF WINSTOUN AND HER DAUGHTER.—AN INDUCTION FROM THE NATURE OF FEMALE RIVALRIES.—JEALOUSY IN A LOVER.—ARISTOCRATIC IMPERTINENCE RETORTED.—LISTENERS NEVER HEAR GOOD OF THEMSELVES.—REMARKS ON THE AMUSEMENTS OF A PUBLIC ASSEMBLY.—THE SUPPER.—THE FALSENESS OF SEEMING GAYETY.—VARIOUS REFLECTIONS, NEW AND TRUE.—WHAT PASSES BETWEEN GODOLPHIN AND CONSTANCE.

It was the evening of the ball to be given in honour of Lord Erpingham's arrival. Constance, dressed for conquest, sat alone in her dressing-room. Her woman had just left her. The lights still burned in profusion about the antique chamber (antique, for it was situated in the oldest part of the castle); those lights streamed full upon the broad brow and exquisite features of Miss Vernon. As she leaned back in her chair—the fairy foot upon the low Gothic stool, and the hands drooping beside her despondingly—her countenance betrayed much, but not serene thought; and mixed with that thought was something of irresolution, and of great and real sadness.

It is not, as I have before hinted, to be supposed that Constance's lot had been hitherto a proud one, even though she was the most admired beauty of her day; even though she lived with, and received adulation from, the high, and noble, and haughty of her land. Often, in the glittering crowd that she attracted around her, her ear, sharpened by the jealousy and pride of her nature, caught words that dashed the cup of pleasure and of vanity with shame and anger. "What! that *the* Vernon's daughter! Poor girl! de-

pendant entirely on Lady Erpingham. Ah! she'll take some rich *roturier*, I hope."

Such words from ill-tempered dowagers and faded beauties were no unfrequent interruption to her brief-lived and wearisome triumphs. She heard manœuvring mothers caution their booby sons, whom Constance would have looked into the dust had they dared but to touch her hand, against her untitled and undowried charms. She saw cautious earls, who were all courtesy one night, all coldness another, as some report had reached them, accusing their hearts of feeling too deeply her attractions, or, as they themselves suspected, for the first time, that a heart was not a word for a poetical nothing, and that to look on so beautiful and glorious a creature was sufficient to convince them, even yet, of the possibility of emotion. She had felt to the quick the condescending patronage of duchesses and *chaperons;* the oblique hint; the nice and fine distinction, which in polished circles divides each grade from the other, and allows you to be galled without the pleasure of feeling justified in offence.

All this, which, in the flush and heyday of youth, and gayety, and loveliness, would have been unnoticed by other women, rankled deep in the mind of Constance Vernon. The image of her dying father, his complaints, his accusations (the justice of which she never for an instant questioned), rose up before her in the brightest hours of the dance and the revel. She was not one of those women whose meek and gentle nature would fly what wounds them: Constance had resolved to conquer. Despising glitter, and gayety, and show, she burned, she thirsted for power—a power which could retaliate the insults she fancied she had received, and should turn the condescension of the great into homage. This object, which every casual word, every heedless glance from another fixed deeper and deeper in her heart, took a sort of sanctity from the associations with which she linked it—her father's memory and his dying breath.

At this moment in which we have portrayed her, all these restless, and sore, and haughty feelings were busy within; but they were combated, even while the more fiercely aroused, by one soft and tender thought —the image of Godolphin—of Godolphin, the spendthrift heir of a broken fortune and a fallen house. She felt too deeply that she loved him; and, ignorant of his worldlier qualities, imagined that he loved her with all the devotion of that romance, and the ardour of that genius, which appeared to her to compose his character. But this persuasion gave her now no delightful emotion. Convinced that she ought to reject him, his image only coloured with sadness those objects and that ambition which she had hitherto regarded with an exulting pride. She was not the less bent on the lofty ends of her destiny; but the glory and the illusion had fallen from them. She had taken an insight into futurity, and felt that to enjoy power was to lose happiness. Yet, with this full conviction, she forsook the happiness and clung to the power. Alas! for our best and wisest theories, our problems, our systems, our philosophy! Human beings will never cease to mistake the means for the end; and, despite the dogmas of sages, our conduct does *not* depend on our convictions.

Carriage after carriage had rolled beneath the windows of the room where Constance sat, and still she moved not; until, at length, a certain composure, as if the result of some determination, stole over her features. The brilliant and transparent hues returned to her cheeks; and, as she rose and stood erect, with a certain calmness and energy on her lip and forehead, perhaps her beauty had never seemed of so lofty and august a cast. In passing through the chamber, she stopped for a moment opposite the mirror that reflected her stately shape in its full height. Beauty is so truly the weapon of woman, that it is as impossible for her, even in grief, wholly to forget its effect, as it is for the dying warrior to look with indifference on the sword with which he has won his trophies or his fame. Nor

was Constance that evening *disposed* to be indifferent to the effect she should produce. She looked on the reflection of herself with a feeling of triumph, not arising from vanity alone.

And when did mirror ever give back a form more worthy of a Pericles to worship or an Apelles to paint? Though but little removed from the common height, the impression Constance always gave was that of a person much taller than she really was. A certain majesty in the turn of head, the fall of the shoulders, the breadth of the brow, and the exceeding calmness of the features, invested her with an air which I have never seen equalled by any one, but which, had Pasta been a beauty, she might have possessed. But there was nothing hard or harsh in this majesty. Whatsoever of a masculine nature Constance might have inherited, nothing masculine, nothing not exquisitely feminine was visible in her person. Her shape was rounded, and sufficiently full to show that in middle age its beauty would be preserved by that richness and freshness which a moderate increase of the proportions always gives to the sex. Her arms and hands were, and are, even to this day, of a beauty the more striking because it is so rare. Nothing in any European country is more uncommon than an arm really beautiful both in hue and shape. In any assembly we go to, what miserable bones, what angular elbows, what red skins, do we see under the cover of those capacious sleeves, which are only one whit less ugly. At the time I speak of, those coverings were not worn; and the white, round, dazzling arm of Constance, bare almost to the shoulder, was girded by dazzling gems, which at once set off, and were foiled by, the beauty of nature. Her hair was of the most luxuriant and of the deepest black; and it was worn in a fashion—then uncommon, without being *bizarre*—now hackneyed by the plainest faces, though adapted only to suit the highest order of beauty—I mean that simple and classic fashion to which the French have given a name borrowed from Calypso, but which appears to me suited rather to an intellectual

than a voluptuous goddess. Her long lashes, and a brow delicately but darkly pencilled, gave additional eloquence to an eye of the deepest blue, and a classic contour to a profile so slightly aquiline that it was commonly considered Grecian. That necessary completion to all real beauty of either sex, the short and curved upper lip, terminated in the most dazzling teeth, and the ripe and dewy under lip added to what was noble in her beauty that charm also which is exclusively feminine. Her complexion was capricious; now pale, now tinged with the pink of the sea-shell, or the softest shade of the rose-leaf: but in either it was so transparent, that you doubted which became her the most. To these attractions add a throat, a bust of the most dazzling whiteness, and the justest and most chiselled proportions; a foot whose least beauty was its smallness; and a waist narrow—not the narrowness of tenuity or constraint—but round, gradual, insensibly less in its compression—and the person of Constance Vernon, in the bloom of her youth, is before you.

She passed with her quiet and stately step from her room through one adjoining it, and which we stop to notice, because it was her customary sitting-room when not with Lady Erpingham. There had Godolphin, with the foreign but courtly freedom, the respectful and chivalric ease of his manners, often sought her; there had he lingered in order to detain her yet a moment and a moment longer from other company, seeking a sweet excuse in some remark on the books that strewed the tables, or the music in that recess, or the forest-scene from those windows through which the moon of autumn now stole with its own peculiar power to soften and subdue. As these recollections came across her, her step faltered and her colour faded from its glow: she paused a moment, cast a mournful glance round the room, and then tore herself away, descended the lofty staircase, passed the stone-hall melancholy with old banners and rusted crests, and bore her beauty and her busy heart into the thickening and gay crowd.

Her eye looked once more round for the graceful

form of Godolphin: but he was not visible; and she had scarcely satisfied herself of this before Lord Erpingham, the hero of the evening, approached and claimed her hand.

"I have just performed my duty," said he, with a gallantry of speech not common to him, "now for my reward. I have danced the first dance with Lady Margaret Midgecombe: I come, according to your promise, to dance the second with you."

There was something in these words that stung one of the morbid remembrances in Miss Vernon's mind. Lady Margaret Midgecombe, in ordinary life, would have been thought a good-looking, vulgar girl: she was a duke's daughter, and she was termed a Hebe. Her little nose, and her fresh colour, and her silly but not unmalicious laugh, were called enchanting; and all irregularities of feature and faults of shape were absolutely turned into merits by that odd commendation, so common with us—"A deused fine girl; none of your regular beauties."

Not only in the county of ***shire, but in London, had Lady Margaret Midgecombe been set up as the rival beauty of Constance Vernon. And Constance, far too lovely, too cold, too proud not to acknowledge beauty in others when it really existed, was nevertheless unaffectedly indignant at a comparison so unworthy: she even, at times, despised her own claims to admiration, since claims so immeasurably inferior could be put into competition with them. Added to this sore feeling for Lady Margaret was one for Lady Margaret's mother. The Duchess of Winstoun was a woman of ordinary birth—the daughter of a peer of great wealth but new family. She had married, however, one of the most powerful dukes in the peerage; a stupid, heavy, pompous man, with four castles, eight parks, a coal-mine, a tin-mine, six boroughs, and about thirty livings. Inactive and reserved, the duke was seldom seen in public: the care of supporting his rank devolved on the duchess; and she supported it with as much solemnity of purpose as if she had been a cheese-

monger's daughter. Stately, insolent, and coarse—asked everywhere—insulting all—hated and courted—such was the Duchess of Winstoun, and such, perhaps, have been other duchesses before her.

Be it understood that, at that day, fashion had not risen to the despotism it now enjoys: it took its colouring from power, not controlled it. I shall show, indeed, how much of its present condition that *fashion* owes to the heroine of these memoirs. The Duchess of Winstoun could not now be that great person she was then: there is a certain good taste in fashion which repels the mere insolence of rank—which requires persons to be either agreeable, or brilliant, or, at least, original—which weighs stupid dukes in a righteous balance, and finds vulgar duchesses wanting. But in lack of this new authority—this moral sebastocrator between the sovereign and the dignity hitherto considered next to the sovereign's—her Grace of Winstoun exercised with impunity the rights of insolence. She had taken an especial dislike to Constance: partly because the few good judges of beauty, who care neither for rank nor report, had very unreservedly placed Miss Vernon beyond the reach of all competition with her daughter; and principally because the high spirit and keen irony of Constance had given more than once to the duchess's effrontery so cutting and so public a check, that she had felt with astonishment and rage there was one woman in that world—that woman, too, unmarried—who could retort rudeness to the Duchess of Winstoun. Spiteful, however, and numerous were the things she said of Miss Vernon when Miss Vernon was absent; and haughty beyond measure were the inclination of her head and the tone of her voice when Miss Vernon was present. If, therefore, Constance was disliked by the duchess, we may readily believe that she returned the dislike. The very name roused her spleen and her pride; and it was with a feeling all a woman's, though scarcely feminine in the amiable sense of the word, that she learned to whom the honour of Lord Erpingham's precedence had been (though necessarily) given.

As Lord Erpingham led her to her place, a buzz of admiration and enthusiasm followed her steps. This pleased Erpingham more than, at that moment, it did Constance. Already intoxicated by her beauty, he was proud of the effect it produced on others, for that effect was a compliment to his taste. He exerted himself to be agreeable; nay, more, to be fascinating: he affected a low voice; and he attempted—poor man!—to flatter.

The Duchess of Winstoun and her daughter sat behind on an elevated bench. They saw with especial advantage the attentions with which one of the greatest of England's earls honoured the daughter of one of the greatest of England's orators. They were shocked at his want of dignity. Constance perceived their chagrin, and she lent a more pleased and attentive notice to Lord Erpingham's compliments: her eyes sparkled and her cheek blushed: and the good folks around, admiring Lord Erpingham's immense whiskers, thought Constance in love.

It was just at this time that Percy Godolphin entered the room.

Although Godolphin's person was not of a showy order, there was something about him that always arrested attention. His air—his carriage—his long, fair locks—his rich and foreign habit of dress, which his high bearing and intellectual countenance redeemed from coxcombry—all united, gave something remarkable and distinguished to his appearance: and the interest attached to his fortunes, and to his social reputation for genius and eccentricity, could not fail of increasing the effect he produced when his name was known.

From the throng of idlers that gathered around him—from the bows of the great and the smiles of the fair, Godolphin, however, directed his whole notice, his whole soul, to the spot which was hallowed by Constance Vernon. He saw her engaged with a man rich, powerful, and handsome. He saw that she listened to her partner with evident interest, that he addressed

her with evident admiration. His heart sank within him; he felt faint and sick; then came anger, mortification; then agony and despair. All his former resolutions—all his prudence, his worldliness, his caution, vanished at once: he felt only that he loved, that he was supplanted, that he was undone. The dark and fierce passions of his youth, of a nature, in reality, wild and vehement, swept away at once the projects and the fabrics of that shallow and chill philosophy he had borrowed from the world, and deemed the wisdom of the closet. A cottage and a desert with Constance—Constance all his, heart and hand—would have been Paradise: he would have nursed no other ambition, nor dreamed of a reward beyond. Such effect has jealousy upon us. We confide, and we hesitate to accept a boon: we are jealous, and we would lay down life to attain it.

"What a handsome fellow Erpingham is!" said a young man in a cavalry regiment.

Godolphin heard, and groaned audibly.

"And what, a devilish handsome girl he is dancing with!" answered another young man from Oxford.

"Oh, Miss Vernon! By Jove, he seems smitten. What a capital thing it would be for her!"

"And for him, too!" cried the more chivalrous Oxonian.

"Humph!" said the officer.

"I heard," renewed the Oxonian, "that she was to be married to young Godolphin. He was staying here a short time ago. They rode and walked together. What a lucky fellow he has been! I don't know any one I should like to see so much."

"Hush!" said a third person, looking at Godolphin.

Percy moved on. Accomplished and self-collected as he usually was, he could not wholly conceal the hell within. His brow grew knit and gloomy: he scarcely returned the salutations he received; and, moving out of the crowd, he stole to a seat behind a large pillar, and, scarcely seen by any one, fixed his eyes on the form and movements of Miss Vernon.

It so happened that he had placed himself in the vicinity of the Duchess of Winstoun, and within hearing of the conversation that I am about to record.

The dance being over, Lord Erpingham led Constance to a seat close by Lady Margaret Midgecombe. The duchess had formed her plan of attack; and, rising as she saw Constance *within reach*, approached her with an air that affected civility.

"How do you, Miss Vernon? I am happy to see you looking so well. What truth in the report, eh?" And the duchess showed her teeth—*videlicet*, smiled.

"What report does your grace allude to?"

"Nay, nay, I am sure Lord Erpingham has heard it as well as myself; and I wish, for *your* sake (a slight emphasis), indeed, for both your sakes, that it may be true."

"To wait till the Duchess of Winstoun speaks intelligibly would be a waste of her time and my own," said the haughty Constance, with the rudeness in which she then delighted, and for which she has since become known. But the duchess was not to be offended until she had completed her manœuvre.

"Well, now," said she, turning to Lord Erpingham, "I appeal to you: is not Miss Vernon to be married very soon to Mr. Godolphin? I am sure (with an affected good-nature and compassion that stung Constance to the quick), I am sure I *hope* so."

"Upon my word, you amaze me," said Lord Erpingham, opening to their fullest extent the large, round hazel eyes for which he was so justly celebrated. "I never heard this before."

"Oh! a secret as yet?" said the duchess: "very well! I can keep a secret."

Lady Margaret looked down and laughed prettily.

"I thought till now," said Constance, with grave composure, "that no person could be more contemptible than one who *collects* idle reports: I now find I was wrong: a person infinitely more contemptible is one who *invents* them."

The rude duchess, beat at her own weapons, blush-

ed with anger even through her rouge: but Constance turned away, and, still leaning on Lord Erpingham's arm, sought another seat; that seat, on the opposite side of the pillar behind which Godolphin sat, was still within his hearing.

"Upon my word, Miss Vernon," said Erpingham, "I admire your spirit. Nothing like setting down those absurd people who try to tease one, and think one dares not retort. But pray—I hope I'm not impertinent—pray, may I ask if this rumour have *any* truth in it?"

"Certainly not," said Constance, with great effort, but in a clear tone.

"No; I should have thought not—I should have thought not. Godolphin's much too poor—much too poor for you. Miss Vernon is not born to marry for love in a cottage—is she?"

Constance sighed.

That soft, low tone thrilled to Godolphin's very heart. He bent forward—he held his breath—he thirsted for her voice—for some tone, some word in answer; it came not at that moment.

"You remember," renewed the earl, "you remember Miss L——: no, she was before your time. Well! she married S——, much such another fellow as Godolphin. He had not a shilling, but he lived well—had a house in Mayfair—gave dinners—hunted at Melton, and so forth—in short, he played high. She had about ten thousand pounds. They married, and lived for two years so comfortably, you have no idea. Every one envied them. They did not keep a close carriage, but he used to drive her out to dinners in his French cabriolet.* There was no show, no pomp—everything deused neat, though—quite love in a cottage, only the cottage was in Curzon-street. At length, however, the cards turned—S—— lost everything—owed more than he could ever pay—we were forced to cut him—and his relation, Lord ——, coming into the ministry a year afterward, got him a place in the

* Then uncommon.

Customs. They live at Brompton: he wears a pepper-and-salt coat, and she a mob-cap with pink ribands: they have five hundred a year, and ten children. Such was the fate of S——'s wife—such may be the fate of Godolphin's. Oh, Miss Vernon could not marry *him!*"

"You are right, Lord Erpingham," said Constance, with emphasis; "but you take too much license in expressing your opinion."

Before Lord Erpingham could stammer forth his apology, they heard a slight noise behind: they turned; Godolphin had risen. His countenance, always inclined to a calm severity—for thought is usually severe in its outward aspect—bent now on both the speakers with so dark and menacing an aspect, that the stout earl felt his heart stand still for a moment; and Constance was appalled as if it had been the apparition, and not the living form, of her lover that she beheld. But scarcely had they seen this expression of countenance ere it changed. With a cold and polished smile, a relaxed brow, and a profound inclination of his form, Godolphin greeted the two: and, passing from his seat with a slow step, glided among the crowd and vanished.

What a strange thing, after all, is a great assembly! An immense mob of persons, who feel for each other the profoundest indifference, met together to join in amusements which the large majority of them consider wearisome beyond conception. How unintellectual, how uncivilized such a scene and such actors! What a remnant of barbarous times, when people danced because they had nothing to say! Were there nothing ridiculous in dancing, there would be nothing ridiculous in seeing wise men dance. But that sight would be ludicrous, because of the disparity between the mind and the occupation. However, we have some excuse; we go to these assemblies to sell our daughters or flirt with our neighbour's wives. A ballroom is nothing more nor less than a great market-place of beauty. For my part, were I a buyer, I should like making my purchases in a less public mart.

"Come, Godolphin, a glass of Champagne," cried the young Lord Belvoir, as they sat near each other at the splendid supper.

"With all my heart; but not from that bottle! We must have a new one; for this glass is pledged to Lady Delmour, and I would not drink to her health but from the first sparkle! Nothing tame, nothing insipid, nothing that has lost its first freshness, can be dedicated to one so beautiful and young."

The fresh bottle was opened, and Godolphin bowed over his glass to Lord Belvoir's sister—a beauty, and a Blue. Lady Delmour admired Godolphin, and she was flattered by a compliment that no one wholly educated in England would have had the gallant courage to utter across a crowded table.

"You have been dancing?" said she.

"No!"

"What then?"

"What then?" said Godolphin. "Ah, Lady Delmour, do not ask." The look that accompanied the words supplied them with a meaning. "Need I add," said he, in a lower voice, "that I have been thinking of the most beautiful person present?"

"Pooh!" said Lady Delmour, turning away her head.

Now that *pooh* is a very significant word. On the lips of a man of business it denotes contempt for romance; on the lips of a politician it rebukes a theory. With that monosyllable a philosopher massacres a fallacy: by those four letters a rich man gets rid of a beggar. But in the rosy mouth of a woman, the harshness vanishes, the disdain becomes encouragement. "Pooh!" says the lady when you tell her she is handsome; but she smiles when she says it. With the same reply she receives your protestation of love, and blushes as she receives it. With men it is the sternest, with women the softest, exclamation in the language.

"Pooh!" said Lady Delmour, turning away her head: and Godolphin was in singular spirits. What a strange thing that we should call such hilarity from our gloom!

The stroke induces the flash; excite the nerves by jealousy, by despair, and with the proud, you only trace the excitement by the mad mirth and hysterical laughter it creates.

Godolphin was charming *comme un amour*, and the young countess was delighted with his gallantry.

"Did you ever love?" asked she, tenderly, as they sat alone after supper.

"Alas, yes!" said he.

"How often?"

"Read Marmontel's story of the 'Four Vials:' I have no other answer."

Oh, what a beautiful tale that is! The whole history of a man's heart is contained in it.

While Godolphin was thus talking with Lady Delmour, his whole soul was with Constance; of her only he thought, and on her he thirsted for revenge. There is a curious phenomenon in love, showing how much vanity has to do with even the best species of it; when, for your mistress to prefer another, changes all your affection into hatred, is it the *loss* of the mistress, or her *preference* to the other? The last, to be sure: for, if the former, you would only grieve; but jealousy does not make you grieve, it makes you rage; it does not sadden, it stings. After all, as we grow old, and look back on the "master passion," how we smile at the fools it made of us—at the importance we attach to it—at the millions that have been governed by it! When we examine the passion of love, it is like examining the character of some great man; we are astonished to perceive the littlenesses that belong to it. We ask in wonder, "How come such effects from such a cause?"

Godolphin continued talking sentiment with Lady Delmour until her lord, who was very fond of his carriage-horses, came up and took her away; and then, perhaps, glad to be relieved, Percy sauntered into the ballroom, where, though the crowd was somewhat thinned, the dance was continued with that spirit which always seems to increase as the night advances.

For my own part, I now and then look late in at a ball as a warning and grave memento of the flight of time. No amusement belongs of right so essentially to the young in their first youth—to the unthinking, the intoxicated—to those whose blood is an elixir. There, above all places, do I recognise the vast gulf between me and my youth.

"If Constance be woman," said Godolphin to himself, as he returned to the ballroom, "I will yet humble her to my will. I have not learned the science so long to be now foiled in the first moment I have seriously wished to triumph."

As this thought inspired and excited him, he moved along at some distance from, but carefully within the sight of, Constance. He paused by Lady Margaret Midgecombe. He addressed her. Notwithstanding the insolence and the ignorance of the Duchess of Winstoun, he was well received by both mother and daughter. Some persons there are, in all times and in all spheres, who command a certain respect, bought neither by riches, rank, nor even scrupulous morality of conduct. They win it by the reputation that talent alone can win them, and which yet is not always the reputation of talent. No man, even in the frivolous societies of the great, obtains homage without certain qualities, which, had they been happily directed, would have conducted him to fame. Had the attention of a Grammont or of a —— been early turned towards what *ought* to be the objects desired, who can doubt that, instead of the heroes of a circle, they might have been worthy of becoming names for posterity?

Thus the genius of Godolphin had drawn around him an *éclat* which made even the haughtiest willing to receive and to repay his notice; and Lady Margaret actually blushed with pleasure when he asked her to dance. A foreign dance, then only very partially known in England, had been called for: few were acquainted with it—those only who had been abroad; and as the movements seemed to require peculiar grace of person, some even among those few declined, through modesty, the exhibition.

To this dance Godolphin led Lady Margaret. All crowded round to see the performers; and as each went through the giddy and intoxicating maze, they made remarks on the awkwardness, or the singularity, or the impropriety of the dance. But when Godolphin began, the murmurs changed. The slow and stately measure then adapted to the steps was one in which the grace and symmetry of his person might eminently display itself. Lady Margaret was at least as well acquainted with the dance; and the couple altogether so immeasurably excelled all competitors, that the rest, as if sensible of it, stopped one after the other; and when Godolphin, perceiving that they were alone, stopped also, the spectators made their approbation more audible than approbation usually is in polished society.

As Godolphin paused his eyes met those of Constance. There was not there the expression he had anticipated: there was neither the anger of jealousy, nor the restlessness of offended vanity, nor the desire of conciliation, visible in those large and speaking orbs. A deep, a penetrating, a sad inquiry seemed to dwell in her gaze—seemed anxious to pierce into his heart, and to discover whether there she possessed the power to wound, or whether each had been deceived: so at least seemed that fixed and melancholy intenseness of look to Godolphin. He left Lady Margaret abruptly: in an instant he was by the side of Constance.

"You must be delighted with this evening," said he, bitterly: "wherever I go I hear your praises: every one admires you; and he who does not admire so much as worship you, *he* alone is beneath your notice. He—born to such shattered fortunes—he indeed might never *aspire* to that which titled and wealthy idiots deem they may *command*—the hand of Constance Vernon."

It was with a low and calm tone that Godolphin spoke. Constance turned deadly pale: her frame trembled, but she did not answer immediately. She moved to a seat retired a little from the busy crowd;

Godolphin followed, and sat himself beside her; and then, with a slight effort, Constance spoke.

"You heard what was said, Mr. Godolphin, and I grieve to think you did. If I offended you, however, forgive me, I pray you; I pray it sincerely, warmly. God knows I have suffered myself enough from idle words, and from the slighting opinion with which this hard world visits the poor, not to feel deep regret and shame if I wound, by like means, another, more especially—" Constance's voice trembled—"more especially *you!*"

As she spoke she turned her eyes on Godolphin, and they were full of tears. The tenderness of her voice, her look, melted him at once. Was it to him, indeed, that the haughty Constance addressed the words of kindness and apology? to him, whose extrinsic circumstances she had heard described as so unworthy of her, and, his reason told him, with such justice?

"Oh, Miss Vernon!" said he, passionately, "Miss Vernon—Constance—dear, dear Constance! dare I call you so? hear me one word. I love you with a love which leaves me no words to tell it. I know my faults, my poverty, my unwothiness: but—but—may I —may I hope?"

And all the woman was in Constance's cheek as she listened. That cheek, how richly was it dyed! Her eyes drooped, her bosom heaved. How every word in those broken sentences sank into her heart! never was a tone forgotten. The child may forget its mother, and the mother desert the child; but never, never from a woman's heart departs the memory of the first confession of love from him whom she first loves! She lifted her eyes, and again withdrew them, and again gazed.

"This must not be," at last she said; "no, no! it is folly, madness, in both!"

"Not so; nay, not so!" whispered Godolphin, in the softest notes of a voice that could never be harsh. "It may seem folly—madness if you will, that the brilliant and all-idolized Miss Vernon should listen to the vows of so lowly an adorer: but try me, prove me; and own

—yes, you *will* own, some years hence, that that folly has been happy beyond the happiness of prudence or ambition."

"This!" answered Constance, struggling with her emotions, "this is no spot or hour for such a conference. Let us meet to-morrow—the western chamber."

"And the hour?"

"Twelve!"

"And I may hope—till then?"

Constance again grew pale; and in a voice that, though it scarcely left her lips, struck coldness and dismay into his sudden and delighted confidence, answered,

"No, Percy, there is no hope!—none!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE INTERVIEW.—THE CRISIS OF A LIFE.

The western chamber was that I have mentioned as the one in which Constance usually fixed her retreat, when neither sociability nor state summoned her to the more public apartments. I should have said that Godolphin slept in the house; for, coming from a distance, and through country roads, Lady Erpingham had proffered him that hospitality, and he had willingly accepted it. Before the appointed hour he was at the appointed spot.

He had passed the hours till then without even seeking his pillow. In restless strides across his chamber, he had revolved those words with which Constance had seemed to deny the hopes she herself had created. All private and more selfish schemes or reflections had vanished, as by magic, from the mind of a man prematurely formed, but not yet wholly hardened, in the mould of worldly speculation. He thought no more of what

he should relinquish in obtaining her hand: with the ardour of boyish and real love, he thought only of her. It was as if there existed no world but the little spot in which she breathed and moved. Poverty, privation, toil, the change of the manners and habits of his whole previous life, to those of professional enterprise and self-denial—to all this he looked forward, not so much with calmness as with triumph.

"Be but Constance mine!" said he, again and again; and again and again those fatal words knocked at his heart, "No hope—none!" and he gnashed his teeth in very anguish, and muttered, "But mine she will not, she will never be!"

Still, however, before the hour of noon, something of his habitual confidence returned to him. He had succeeded, though but partially, in reasoning away the obvious meaning of the words; and he ascended to the chamber from the gardens, in which he had sought, by the air, to cool his mental fever, with a sentiment ominous and doubtful indeed, but still removed from despondency and despair.

The day was sad and heavy. A low, drizzling rain, and labouring yet settled clouds, which denied all glimpse to the sky, and seemed cursed into stagnancy by the absence of all wind or even breeze, increased by those associations we endeavour in vain to resist, the dark and oppressive sadness of his thoughts.

He paused as he laid his hand on the door of the chamber; he listened; and in the acute and painful life which seemed breathed into all his senses, he felt as if he could have heard—though without the room—the very breath of Constance; or known, as by an inspiration, the presence of her beauty. He opened the door gently: all was silence and desolation for him—Constance was not there!

He felt, however, as if that absence was a relief. He breathed more freely, and seemed to himself more prepared for the meeting. He took his station by the recess of the window: in vain—he could rest in no spot: he walked to and fro, pausing only for a mo-

ment as some object before him reminded him of past and more tranquil hours. The books he had admired, and which, at his departure, had been left in their usual receptacles at another part of the house, he now discovered on the tables: they opened of themselves at the passages he had read aloud to Constance: those passages, in his presence, she had not seemed to admire: he was inexpressibly touched to perceive that, in his absence, they had become dear to her. As he turned with a beating heart from this silent proof of affection, he was startled by the sudden and almost living resemblance to Constance, which struck upon him in a full-length picture opposite—the picture of her father. That picture, by one of the best of our great modern masters of the art, had been taken of Vernon in the proudest epoch of his prosperity and fame. He was portrayed in the attitude in which he had uttered one of the most striking sentences of one of his most brilliant orations: the hand was raised, the foot advanced, the chest expanded. Life, energy, command, flashed from the dark eye, breathed from the dilated nostril, broke from the inspired lip. That noble brow—those modelled features—that air, so full of the royalty of genius—how startlingly did they resemble the softer lineaments of Constance!

Arrested, in spite of himself, by the skill of the limner and the characteristics of the portrait, Godolphin stood motionless and gazing till the door opened, and Constance herself stood before him. She smiled faintly, but with sweetness, as she approached; and, seating herself, motioned him to a chair at a little distance. He obeyed the gesture in silence.

"Godolphin!" said she, softly. At the sound of her voice he raised his eyes from the ground, and fixed them on her countenance with a look so full of an imploring and earnest meaning, so expressive of the passion, the suspense of his heart, that Constance felt her voice cease at once. But he saw, as he gazed, how powerful had been his influence. Not a vestige of bloom was on her cheek: her very lips were col-

ourless: her eyes were swollen with weeping; and, though she seemed very calm and self-possessed, all her wonted majesty of mien was gone! The form seemed to shrink within itself. Humbleness and sorrow—deep, passionate, but quiet sorrow—had supplanted the haughtiness and the elastic freshness of her beauty. "Mr. Godolphin," she repeated, after a pause, "answer me truly and with candour: not with the world's gallantry, but with a sincere, a plain avowal. Were you not, in your unguarded expressions last night—were you not excited by the surprise, the passion of the moment? Were you not uttering what, had you been actuated only by a calm and premeditated prudence, you would at least have suppressed?"

"Miss Vernon," replied Godolphin, "all that I said last night I now, in calmness and with deliberate premeditation, repeat: all that I can dream of happiness is in your hands."

"I would, indeed, that I could disbelieve you," said Constance, sorrowfully: "I have considered deeply on your words. I am touched—made grateful—proud—yes, truly proud—by your confessed affection—but—"

"Oh, Constance!" cried Godolphin, in a sudden and agonized voice; and, rising, he flung himself impetuously at her feet—"Constance! do not reject me!"

He seized her hand: it struggled not with his. He gazed on her countenance: it was dyed in blushes; and, before those blushes vanished, her agitation found relief in tears, which flowed fast and full.

"Beloved!" said Godolphin, with a solemn tenderness, "why struggle with your heart? That heart I read at this moment: *that* is not averse to me." Constance wept on. "I know what you would say and what you feel," continued Godolphin: "you think that I—that we both are poor: that you could ill bear the humiliations of that haughty poverty which those born to higher fortunes so irksomely endure. You tremble to link your fate with one who has been imprudent—lavish—selfish, if you will. You recoil before you

intrust your happiness to a man who, if he wreck *that*, can offer you nothing in return: no rank—no station—nothing to heal a bruised heart, or cover its wound, at least, in the rich disguises of power and wealth. Am I not right, Constance? Do I not read your mind?"

"No!" said Constance, with energy. "Had I been born any man's daughter but his from whom I take my name; were I the same in all things—mind and heart, save in one feeling, one remembrance, one object—that I am now, God is my witness that I would not cast a thought upon poverty, upon privation: that I would—nay, I do—*do* confide in your vows, your affection. If you have erred, I know it not. If any but you tell me you have erred, I believe them not. You I trust wholly and implicitly. God, I say, is my witness that, did I obey the voice of my selfish heart, I would gladly, proudly share and follow your fortunes. You mistake me if you think sordid and vulgar ambition can only influence me. No! I could be worthy of you! The daughter of John Vernon could be a worthy wife to the man of indigence and genius. In your poverty I could sooth you; in your labours I could support you; in your reverses console, in your prosperity triumph. But—but, it must not be. Go, Godolphin—dear Godolphin! There are thousands better and fairer than I am, who will do for you as I would have done; but who possess the power I have not—who, instead of sharing, can raise your fortunes. Go! and if it comfort, if it sooth you, believe that I have not been insensible to your generosity, your love. My best wishes, my fondest prayers, my dearest hopes, are yours."

Blinded by her tears, subdued by her emotions, Constance was still herself. She rose—she extricated her hand from Godolphin's—she turned to leave the room. But Godolphin, still kneeling, caught hold of her robe, and gently, but effectually, detained her.

"The picture you have painted," said he, "do not destroy at once. You have portrayed yourself my

soother, guide, restorer. You *can*, indeed you can, be this. You do not know me, Constance. Let me say one word for myself. Hitherto I have shunned fame and avoided ambition. Life has seemed to me so short, and all that even glory wins so poor, that I have thought no labour worth the price of a single hour of pleasure and enjoyment. For you, how joyfully will I renounce my code! For myself I could ask no honour: for you I will labour for all. No toil shall be dry to me, no pleasure shall decoy. I will renounce my idle and desultory pursuits. I will enter the great public arena, where all who come armed with patience and with energy are sure to win. Constance, I am not without talents, though they have slept within me; say but the word, and you know not what they can produce."

An irresolution in Constance was felt as a sympathy by Godolphin; he continued,

"We are both desolate in the world, Constance; we are orphans—friendless, fortuneless. Yet both have made our way without friends, and commanded our associates, though without fortune. Does not this declare we have that within us which, when we are united, can still exalt or conquer our destiny? And we —we—alone in the noisy and contentious world with which we strive—we shall turn, after each effort, to our own hearts, and find there a comfort and a shelter. All things will bind us closer and closer to each other. The thought of our past solitude, the hope of our future objects, will only feed the fountain of our present love. And how much sweeter, Constance, will be honours to you, if we thus win them; sanctified, as they will be, by the sacrifices we have made; by the thought of the many hours in which we desponded, yet took consolation from each other; by the thought how we sweetened mortifications by sympathy, and made even the lowest successes noble by the endearing associations with which we allied them! How much sweeter to you will be such honours than those which you might command at once, but accompanied

by a cold heart; rendered wearisome because won with ease, and low because undignified by fame! Oh, Constance! am I not heard? Have not love, nature, sense triumphed?"

As he spoke he had risen gently, and wound his arms around her not reluctant form: her head reclined upon his bosom, her hand was surrendered to his, and his kiss stole unchidden to her cheek. At that instant the fate of both hung on a very hair. How different might the lot, the character of each have been, had Constance's lips pronounced the words that her heart already recorded! And she might have done so; but, as she raised her eyes, the same object that had before affected Godolphin came vividly upon her, and changed, as by an electric shock, the whole current of her thoughts. Full and immediately before her was the picture of her father. The attitude there delineated, so striking at all times, seemed to Constance at that moment more than ever impressive, and even awful in the *livingness* of its command. It was the face of Vernon in the act of speech—of warning—of reproof; such as she had seen it often in private life; such as she had seen it in his bitter maledictions on his hollow friends at the close of his existence: nay, such as she had seen it—only more fearful, and ghastly with the hues of death—in his last hours; in those hours in which he had pledged her to the performance of his revenge, and bade her live, not for love, but the memory of her sire.

With the sight of that face rushed upon her the dark and solemn recollections of that time and of that vow. The weakness of love vanished before the returning force of a sentiment nursed through her earliest years, fed by her dreams, strengthened by her studies, and hardened by the daring energies of a nature lofty yet fanatical, into the rule, the end, nay, the very religion of life! She tore herself away from the surprised and dismayed Godolphin; she threw herself on her knees before the picture; her lips moved rapidly; the rapid and brief prayer for forgiveness was over, and

Constance rose a new being. She turned to Godolphin, and, lifting her arm towards the picture, as she regarded, with her bright and kindling eyes, the face of her lover, she said,

"As you think now, thought he whose voice speaks to you from the canvass; he who pursued the path that you would tread; who through the same toil, the same pursuit that you would endure, used the same powers and the same genius you would command; he who won—what you might win also at last—the smile of princes, the trust of nobles, the shifting and sandy elevation which the best, and wisest, and greatest statesmen in this country, if unbacked by a sordid and caballing faction, can alone obtain—he warns you from hollow distinction, from its wretched consummation. Oh, Godolphin!" she continued, subdued, and sinking from a high-wrought but momentary paroxysm, uncommon to her collected character, "Oh, Godolphin! I saw that man dying, deserted, lonely, cursed by his genius, ruined by his prosperity. I saw him dying—*die*—of a broken and trampled heart. Could I doom another victim to the same course, and the same perfidy, and the same fate? Could I, with a silent heart, watch by that victim? could I, viewing his certain doom, elate him with false hopes? No, no! fly from me, from the thought of such a destiny. Marry one who can bring you wealth and support you with rank; *then* be ambitious if you will. Leave me to fulfil my doom—MY vow; and to think, however wretched I may be, that I have not inflicted a permanent wretchedness on you."

Godolphin sprang forward, but the door closed upon his eyes, and he saw Constance—as Constance *Vernon* —no more.

CHAPTER XIX.

A RAKE AND EXQUISITE OF THE BEST (WORST) SCHOOL.—A CONVERSATION ON A THOUSAND MATTERS.—THE DECLENSION OF THE *SUI PROFUSUS* INTO THE *ALIENI APPETENS*.

THERE was, in the day I now refer to, a certain house in Chesterfield-street, Mayfair, which few young men anxious for the *éclat* of society passed without a wish for the acquaintance of the inmate. To that small and dingy mansion, with its verandahs of dusky green, and its blinds perpetually drawn, there attached an interest, a consideration, and a mystery. Thither, at the dusk of night, were the hired carriages of intrigue wont to repair, and dames to alight, careful seemingly of concealment, yet wanting, perhaps, even a reputation to conceal. Few, at the early hours of morn, passed that street in their way home from some glittering revel without noticing some three or four chariots in waiting, or without hearing from within the walls the sounds of protracted festivity. That house was the residence of a man who had never done anything in public, and yet was the most noted personage in "Society:" in early life the all-accomplished *Lovelace*; in later years mingling the graces with the decayed heart and the want of principle of a *Grammont*. Feared, contemned, loved, hated, ridiculed, honoured, the very genius, the very personification of a civilized and profligate life seemed imbodied in Agustus Saville. Hitherto we have spoken of, let us now describe him.

Born to the poor fortunes and equivocal station of cadet in a noble but impoverished house, he had passed his existence in a round of lavish, but never inelegant dissipation. Unlike other men, whom youth, and money, and the flush of health, and aristocratic indulgence allure to follies which shock the taste as well as the

morality of the wise, Agustus Saville had never committed an error which was not varnished by grace, and limited by a profound and worldly discretion. A systematic votary of pleasure, no woman had ever through him lost her reputation or her sphere; whether it was that he corrupted into fortunate dissimulation the minds that he betrayed into guilt, or whether he chose his victims with so just a knowledge of their characters, and of the circumstances round them, that he might be sure the secrecy obtained by himself would scarcely be divulged elsewhere. All the world attributed to Agustus Saville the most various and consummate success in that quarter which the lighter part of the world most envies, and in which it most jealously denies success: yet no one could say exactly who, among the many he addressed, had been the object of his triumph. The same quiet and yet victorious discretion waited upon all he did. Never had he stooped to win celebrity from horses or from carriages; nothing in his equipages showed the ambition to be distinguished from another; least of all did he affect that most displeasing of minor ostentations, that offensive exaggeration of neatness, that *outré* simplicity, which our young nobles and aspiring bankers so ridiculously think it *bon ton* to assume. No harness, industriously avoiding brass; no liveries, pretending to the tranquillity of a gentleman's dress; no panels disdaining the armorial attributes of which real dignity should neither be ashamed nor proud, converted plain taste into a display of plainness. He seldom appeared at races, and never hunted; though he was profound master of the calculations in the first, and was, as regarded the second, allowed to be one of the most perfect masters of horsemanship in his time. So, in his dress, while he chose even sedulously what became him most, he avoided the appearance of coxcombry by a disregard to minutiæ. He did not value himself on the perfection of his boot, and suffered a wrinkle in his coat without a sigh: yet even the exquisites of the time allowed that no one was more gentleman-like in the *tout ensemble;* and while he sought

by other means than dress to attract, he never, even in dress, offended. Carefully shunning the character of the professed wit or the general talker, he was yet piquant, shrewd, and animated to the few persons whom he addressed or with whom he associated: and, though he had refused all offers to enter public life, he was sufficiently master of the graver subjects that agitated the times to impress even those best acquainted with them with a belief in his information and his talents.

But he was born poor; and yet he had lived for nearly thirty years as a rich man! What was his secret? he had lived upon others! At all games of science he played with a masterly skill; and in those wherein luck preponderates, there are always chances for a cool and systematic calculation. He had been, indeed, suspected of unfair play; but the charge had never cooled the eagerness with which he had been courted. With far better taste, and far more popularity and estimation than Brummell, he obtained an equal though a more secret sway. Every one was desirous to know him: without his acquaintance, the young *débutant* felt that he wanted the qualification to social success; by his intimacy, even vulgarity became the rage. It was true that, as no woman's disgrace was confessedly traced to him, so neither was any man's ruin—save only in the doubtful instance of the unfortunate Johnstone. He never won of any person, however ardent, more than a certain portion of his fortune; the rest of his undoing he left to his satellites; nay, even those who had in reality most reason to complain of him, never perceived his due share in their impoverishment. It was common enough to hear men say, "Ah! Saville, I wish I had taken your advice, and left off while I had yet half my fortune!" They did not accurately heed that the first half was Saville's, because the first half had excited, not ruined them.

Besides this method of making money, so strictly social, Saville had also applied his keen intellect and shrewd sense to other speculations. Cheap houses, cheap horses, fluctuations in the funds, all descriptions

of property (except, perhaps, stolen goods) had passed under his earnest attention; and, in most cases, such speculations had eminently succeeded. He was therefore now, in his middle age, and still unmarried, a man decidedly wealthy; having, without ever playing the miser, without ever stinting a luxury or denying a wish, turned nothing into something, poverty into opulence.

It was noon; and Saville was slowly finishing his morning repast, and conversing with a young man stretched on a sofa opposite in a listless attitude. The room was in perfect keeping with the owner: there was neither velvet, nor gilding, nor *buhl*, nor *marquetrie*—all of which would have been inconsistent with the moderate size of the apartment. But the furniture was new, massive, costly, and luxurious without the ostentation of luxury. A few good pictures, and several exquisite busts and figures in bronze, upon marble pedestals, gave something classic and graceful to the aspect of the room. Annexed to the back drawing-room, looking over Lord Chesterfield's gardens, a small conservatory, filled with rich exotics, made the only feature in the apartment that might have seemed, to a fastidious person, effeminate or unduly voluptuous.

Saville himself was about forty-seven years of age: of a person slight and thin, without being emaciated: a not ungraceful, though habitual stoop, diminished his height, which might be a little above the ordinary standard. In his youth he had been handsome, but in his person there was now little trace of any attraction beyond that of a manner remarkably soft and insinuating: yet in his narrow though high forehead; his sharp, aquiline nose, gray eye, and slightly sarcastic curve of lip, something of his character betrayed itself. You saw, or fancied you saw in them, the shrewdness, the delicacy of tact, the consciousness of duping others; the subtle and intuitive, yet bland and noiseless penetration into the characters around him, which made the prominent features of his mind. And, indeed, of all qualities, dissimulation is that which betrays itself the most often in the physiognomy. A fortunate thing, that the

long habit of betraying should find at times the index in which to betray itself.

"But you don't tell me, my dear Godolphin," said Saville, as he broke the toast into his chocolate, "you don't tell me how the world employed itself at Rome. Were there any of the true calibre there?—steady fellows, yet ardent, like myself?—men who make us feel our strength and put it forth—with whom we cannot dally or idle—who require our coolness of head, clearness of memory, ingenuity of stratagem—in a word, men of my ART—the art of play: were there any such?"

"Not many, but enough for honour," said Godolphin: "for myself, I have long forsworn gambling for profit."

"Ah! I always thought you wanted that perseverance which belongs to strength of character. And how stand your resources now? Sufficient to recommence the world here with credit and *éclat?*"

"Ay, were I so disposed, Saville. But I shall return to Italy. Within a month hence I shall depart."

"What! and only just arrived in town! An heir in possession!"

"Of what?"

"The reputation of having succeeded to a property, the extent of which, if wise, you will tell no one! Are you so young, Godolphin, as to imagine that it signifies one crumb of this bread what be the rent-roll of your estate, so long as you can obtain credit for any sum to which you are pleased to extend it? Credit! beautiful invention! the moral new world to which we fly when banished from the old. Credit! the true charity of Providence, by which they who otherwise would starve live in plenty, and despise the indigent rich. Credit! admirable system, alike for those who live on it and the wiser few who live by it. Will you borrow some money of me, Godolphin?"

"At what per centage?"

"Why, let me see: funds are low; I'll be moderate. But stay; be it with you as I did with George Sinclair. You shall have all you want, and pay me

with a premium when you marry an heiress. Why, man, you wince at the word 'marry?'"

"'Tis a sore subject, Saville: one that makes a man think of halters."

"You are right: I recognise my young pupil. Your old play-writers talked nonsense when they said men lost liberty of person by marriage. Men lose liberty, but it is the liberty of the mind. We cease to be independent of the world's word when we grow respectable with a wife, a fat butler, two children, and a family coach. It makes a gentleman a little better than a grocer or a king! But you have seen Constance Vernon. Why, out on this folly, Godolphin! You turn away. Do you fancy that I did not penetrate your weakness the moment you mentioned her name? still less, do you fancy, my dear young friend, that I, who have lived through nearly half a century, and know our nature, and the whole thermometer of our blood, think one jot the worse of you for forming a caprice—or a passion, if you will—for a woman that would set an anchoret, or, what is still colder, a worn-out debauchee on fire? Bah! Godolphin, I am wiser than you take me for. And I will tell you more. For your sake, I am *happy* that you have incurred already this our common folly (which we all have once in a life), and that the fit is over. I do not pry into your secrets; I know their delicacy. I do not ask which of you drew back; for to have gone forward, to have married, would have been madness in both. Nay, it was an *impossibility:* it could not have happened to my pupil; the ablest, the subtlest, the wisest of my pupils. But, however it was broken off, I repeat that I am glad it happened. One is never sure of a man's wisdom till he has been really and vainly in love. You know what that moralizing lump of absurdity, Lord Edouard, has said in the *Julie*—'the path of the passions conducts us to philosophy!' It is true, very true: and, now that the path has been fairly trod, the goal is at hand. *Now* I can confide in your steadiness: now I can feel that you will run no chance, in future, of over-appreciating that bawble, Woman.

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You will beg, borrow, steal, and exchange or lose the jewel with the same delicious excitement, coupled with the same steady indifference, with which we play at a more scientific game, and for a more comprehensive reward. I say more comprehensive reward; for how many women may we be able to buy by a judicious bet on the odd trick!"

"Your turn is sudden," said Godolphin, smiling; "and there is some justice in your reasoning. The fit *is* over; and, if ever I can be wise, I have entered on wisdom now. But talk of this no more."

"I will not," said Saville, whose unerring tact had reached just the point where to stop, and who had led Godolphin through just that vein of conversation, half sentimentalizing, half sensible, all profligate, which seldom fails to win the ear of a man both of imagination and of the world. "I will not, and to vary the topic, I will turn egotist, and tell you *my* adventures."

With this, Saville began a light and amusing recital of his various and singular life for the last three years. Anecdote, jest, maxim, remark, interspersed, gave a zest and piquancy to the narration. An accomplished *roué* always affects to moralize; it is a part of his character. There is a vague and shrewd sentiment that pervades his *morale* and his system. Frequent excitement, and its attendant relaxation; the conviction of the folly of all pursuits; the insipidity of all life; the hollowness of all love; the faithlessness in all ties; the disbelief in all worth; these consequences of a dissipated existence on a thoughtful mind, produce some remarkable, while they make so many wretched characters. They coloured some of the most attractive prose among the French, and the most fascinating verse in the pages of Byron. It might be asked by a profane inquirer (and I have touched on this before), what effect a life nearly similar—a life of luxury, indolence, lassitude, profuse but heartless love—imparted to the deep and touching wisdom in *his* page whom we consider the wisest of men, and who has left us the most melancholy of doctrines?

It was this turn of mind that made Saville's conversation peculiarly agreeable to Godolphin in his present humour; and the latter invested it, from his own mood, with a charm which in reality it wanted. For, as I shall show in Godolphin what deterioration the habits of frivolous and worldly life produce on the mind of a man of genius, I show only in Saville the effect they produce on a man of sense.

"Well, Godolphin," said Saville, as he saw the former rise to depart, "you will at least dine with me to-day—a punctual eight. I think I can promise you an agreeable evening. The Linettini, and that dear little Fanny Millinger (your old *flame*), are coming; and I have asked old Stracey, the poet, to say *bons mots* for them. Poor old Stracey! He goes about to all his former friends and fellow-liberals, boasting of his favour with the great, and does not see that we only use him as we would a puppet-show or a dancing-dog."

"What folly," said Godolphin, "it is in any man of genius (not also of birth) to think the great of this country can possibly esteem him! Nothing can equal the secret enmity with which dull men regard an intellect above their comprehension. Party politics, and the tact, the shifting, the commonplace that party politics alone require, these they *can* appreciate; and they feel respect for an orator, even though he be not a county member; for he can assist them in their paltry ambition for place and pension: but an author or a man of science, the rogues positively jeer at him!"

"And yet," said Saville, "how few men of letters perceive a truth so evident to us, so hackneyed even in the conversations of society! For a little reputation at a dinner-table, for a coaxing note from some titled demirep affecting the De Staël, they forget not only to be glorious, but even to be respectable. And this, too, not only for so petty a gratification, but for one that rarely lasts above a London season. We allow the lowborn author to be the *lion* this year, but we dub him a *bore* the next. We shut our doors upon his

twice-told jests, and send for the Prague minstrels to sing to us after dinner instead."

"However," said Godolphin, "it is only poets you find so foolish as to be deceived by you. There is not a single prose writer of real genius so absurd."

"And why is that?"

"Because," replied Godolphin, philosophizing, "poets address themselves more to women than men, and insensibly they acquire the weaknesses which they are accustomed to address. A poet whose verses delight the women will be found, if we closely analyze his character, to be very like a woman himself."

"You don't love poets?" said Saville.

"The glory of old has departed from them. I mean, less from their pages than their minds. We have plenty of beautiful poets, but how little poetry breathing of a great soul!"

Here the door opened, and a Mr. Glosson was announced. There entered a little, smirking, neat-dressed man, prim as a lawyer or a house-agent.

"Ah, Glosson, is that you?" said Saville, with something like animation: "sit down, my good sir, sit down. Well! well! (rubbing his hands) what news? what news?"

"Why, Mr. Saville, I think we may get the land from old ——. He has the right of the *job*. I have been with him all this morning. He asks six thousand pounds for it."

"The unconscionable dog! He got it from the crown for two."

"Ah, very true, very true: but you don't see, sir, you don't see, that it is well worth nine. Sad times, sad times: jobs from the crown are growing scarcer every day, Mr. Saville."

"Humph! that's all a chance, a speculation. Times are bad, indeed, as you say: no money in the market: go, Glosson, offer him five; your per-centage shall be one per cent. higher than if I pay six thousand, and shall be counted up to the latter sum."

"He! he! he! sir!" grinned Glosson: "you are fond of your joke, Mr. Saville."

"Well, now, what else in the market? Never mind my friend: Mr. Godolphin—Mr. Glosson; now all *gêne* is over; proceed—proceed."

Glosson hummed, and bowed, and hummed again, and then glided on to speak of houses, and crown lands, and properties in Wales, and places at court (for some of the subordinate posts at the palace were then, perhaps are now, regular matter of barter); and Saville, bending over the table, with his thin, delicate hands clasped intently, and his brow denoting his interest, and his sharp, shrewd eye fixed on the agent, furnished to the contemplative Godolphin a picture which he did not fail to note, to moralize on, to despise!

What a spectacle is that of the prodigal rake, hardening and sharpening into the grasping speculator!

CHAPTER XX.

FANNY MILLINGER ONCE MORE. — LOVE. — WOMAN. — BOOKS.—A HUNDRED TOPICS TOUCHED ON THE SURFACE.—GODOLPHIN'S STATE OF MIND MORE MINUTELY EXAMINED.—THE DINNER AT SAVILLE'S.

Godolphin went to see and converse with Fanny Millinger. She was still unmarried, and still the fashion. There was a sort of allegory of real life—like that which Goëthe would effect—in the manner in which, at certain epochs of his existence, our Idealist was brought into contact with the fair actress of ideal creations. There was, in short, something of a moral in the way these two streams of existence—the one belonging to the actual, the other to the imaginary—flowed on, crossing each other at stated times. Which was the more really imaginative—the life of the stage, or that of the world's stage?

The gay Fanny was rejoiced to welcome back again her early lover. She ran on, talking of a thousand topics, without remarking the absent mind and musing

eye of Godolphin, till he himself stopped her somewhat abruptly:

"Well, Fanny, well, and what do you know of Saville? You have grown intimate with him, eh? We shall meet at his house this evening."

"Oh, yes, he is a charming person in his little way; and the only man who allows me to be a friend without dreaming of becoming a lover. Now that's what I like. We poor actresses have so much would-be love in the course of our lives, that a little friendship now and then is a novelty which other and soberer people can never enjoy. On reading 'Gil Blas' the other day—I am no great reader, as you may remember—I was struck by that part in which the dear Santillane assures us that there was never any love between him and Laura the actress. I thought it so true to nature, so probable, that they should have formed so strong an intimacy for each other, lived in the same house, had every opportunity for love, yet never loved. And it was exactly because she was an actress, and a light, good-for-nothing creature, that it so happened; the very multiplicity of lovers prevented her falling in love: the very carelessness of her life, poor girl, rendered a friend so charming to her. It would have spoiled the friend to have made him an adorer; it would have turned the rarity into the every-day character. Now, so it is with me and Saville; I like his wit, he likes my good temper. We see each other as often as if we were in love, and yet I do not believe it even possible that he should ever kiss my hand. After all," continued Fanny, laughing, "love is not so necessary to us women as people think. Fine writers say, 'Oh, men have a thousand objects, women but one!' That's nonsense, dear Percy; women have their thousand objects too. They have not the bar, but they have the milliner's shop; they can't fight, but they can sit by the window and embroider a work-bag; they don't rush into politics, but they plunge their souls into love for a parrot or a lapdog. Don't let men flatter themselves; Providence has been just as kind in that respect to one sex as to

the other; our objects are small, yours great; but a small object may occupy the mind just as much as the loftiest."

"Ours great! Psha!" said Godolphin, who was rather struck by Fanny's remarks; "there is nothing great in those professions which man is pleased to extol. Is selfishness great? Is the low trickery, the organized lies of the bar a great calling? Is the mechanical slavery of the soldier—fighting because he is in the way of fighting, without knowing the cause, without an object, save a dim, foolish vanity, which he calls glory and cannot analyze—is that a great aim and vocation? Well: the Senate! look at the outcry which wise men make against the loathsome corruption of that arena; then look at the dull hours, the tedious talk, the empty boasts, the poor and flat rewards, and tell me where is the greatness? No, Fanny! the embroidered work-bag and the petted parrot afford just as great—morally great—occupations as those of the bar, the army, the Senate. It is only the frivolous who talk of frivolities: there is nothing frivolous: all earthly occupations are on a par—alike important if they alike occupy; for to the wise all are poor and valueless."

"I fancy you are very wrong," said the actress, pressing her pretty fingers to her forehead, as if to understand him; "but I cannot tell you why, and I never argue. I ramble on in my odd way, casting out my shrewd things without defending them, if any one chooses to quarrel with them. What I do I let others do. My maxim in talk is my maxim in life. I claim liberty for myself, and give indulgence to others."

"I see," said Godolphin, "that you have plenty of books about you, though you plead *not guilty* to reading. Do you learn your philosophy from them? for I think you have contracted a vein of reflection since we parted, which I scarcely recognise as an old characteristic."

"Why," answered Fanny, "though I don't read, I skim. Sometimes I canter through a dozen novels in a morning. I am disappointed, I confess, in all these

works. I want to see more real knowledge of the world than they ever display. They tell us how Lord Arthur looked, and Lady Lucy dressed, and what was the colour of those curtains, and these eyes, and so forth: and then the better sort, perhaps, *do* also tell us what the heroine felt as well as wore, and try with might and main to pull some string of the internal machine; but still I am not enlightened, not touched. I don't recognise men and women; they are puppets with holyday phrases: and I tell you what, Percy, these novelists make the last mistake you would suppose them guilty of; they have not *romance* enough in them to paint the truths of society. Old gentlemen say novels are bad teachers of life, because they make it too ideal; quite the reverse: novels are too trite! too superficial! Their very talk about love, and the fuss they make about it, show how shallow real romance is with them; for they say nothing new on it, and real romance is for ever striking out new thoughts. Am I not right, Percy? No! life, be it worldly as it may, has a vast deal of romance in it. Every one of us (even poor I) have a mine of thoughts, and fancies, and wishes, that books are too dull and commonplace to reach: the heart is a romance in itself."

"A philosophical romance, my Fanny; full of mysteries, and conceits, and refinements, mixed up with its deeper passages. But how came you so wise?"

"Thank you!" answered Fanny, with a profound courtesy. "The fact is—though you, as in duty bound, don't perceive it—that I am older than I was when we last met. I reflect where I then felt. Besides, the stage fills our heads with a half sort of wisdom, and gives us that strange *mélange* of shrewd experience and romantic notions which is, in fact, the real representation of nine human hearts out of ten. Talking of books, my dear Gil Blas, I want some one to write a novel which shall be a metaphysical Gil Blas: which shall deal more with the mind than Le Sage's book, and less with the actions; which shall make its hero the creature of the world, but a different creation, though

equally true; which shall give a faithful picture in the character of one man of the aspect and the effects of our social system; making that man of a better sort of clay than the amusing lackey was, and the product of a more artificial grade of society. The book I mean would be a sadder one than Le Sage's, but equally faithful to life."

"And it would have more of romance, if I rightly understand what you mean?"

"Precisely: romance of idea as well as incident—natural romance. By-the-way, how few know what natural romance is: so that you feel the ideas in a book or play are true and faithful to the characters they are ascribed to, why mind whether the incidents are probable? Yet common readers only go by the incidents; as if the incidents in three fourths of Shakspeare's plays were even ordinarily possible! But people have so little nature in them, that they don't know what *is* natural!"

Thus Fanny ran on, in no very connected manner; stringing together those remarks which, unless I am mistaken, show how much better an uneducated, clever girl, whose very nature is a quick perception of art, can play the critic, than the pedants who assume the office.

But it was only for the moment that the heavy heart of Godolphin could forget its load. It was in vain that he sought to be amused while yet smarting under the freshness of regret. A great shock had been given to his nature; he had loved against his will; and, as we have seen, on his return to the Priory he had even resolved on curing himself of a passion so unprofitable and unwise. But the jealousy of a night had shivered into dust prudence which never of right belonged to a very ardent and generous nature: that jealousy was soothed, allayed; but how fierce, how stunning was the blow that succeeded it! Constance had confessed love, to herself her motives might seem in that refusal, it was and yet had refused him—for ever! Clear and noble as impossible that they should appear in the same light to Godolphin. Unable to penetrate into the effect which her father's death-bed and her own oath had produced

on the mind of Constance; how indissolubly that remembrance had united itself with all her schemes and prospects for the future; how marvellously, yet how naturally it had converted worldly ambition into a sacred duty; unable, I say, to comprehend all these various, and powerful, and governing motives, Godolphin beheld in her refusal only the aversion to share his slender income, and the desire for loftier station. He considered, therefore, that sorrow was a tribute to her unworthy of himself; he deemed it a part of his dignity to strive to forget. That balmy and hallowed sentiment which, in some losses of the heart, makes it a duty to remember, and preaches a soothing and soft lesson from the very text of regret, was not for the wrung and stricken soul of Godolphin. He only strove to dissipate his grief, and shut out from his mental sight the charmed vision of the first, the only woman he had deeply loved.

Godolphin felt, too, that the sole impulse which could have united the fast-expiring energy and enterprise of his youth to the ambition of life was for ever gone. With Constance—with the proud thoughts that belonged to her—the aspirings after earthly honours were linked, and with her were broken. He felt his old philosophy—the love of ease, the profound contempt for fame—close, like the deep waters over those glittering hosts for whose passage they had been severed for a moment, whelming the crested and gorgeous visions for ever beneath the wave! Conscious of his talents—nay, swayed to and fro by the unquiet stirrings of no common genius—Godolphin yet foresaw that he was not henceforth destined to play a shining part in the crowded drama of life. His career was already closed: he might be contented, prosperous, happy, but never great. He had seen enough of authors, and of the thorns that beset the paths of literature, to experience none of those delusions which cheat the blinded aspirer into the wilderness of publication; that mode of obtaining fame and hatred to which those who feel unfitted for more bustling concerns are impelled. Write he might: and he was fond

(as disappointment increased his propensities to dreaming) of brightening his solitude with the golden palaces and winged shapes that lie glassed within the fancy—the soul's fairy-land. But the vision with him was only evoked one hour to be destroyed the next. Happy had it been for Godolphin, and not unfortunate, perhaps, for the world, had he learned at that exact moment the true motive for human action which he afterward, and too late, discovered. Happy had it been for him to have learned that there is an ambition to *do good*—an ambition to raise the wretched as well as to rise.

Alas! either in letters or in politics, how utterly poor, barren, and untempting is every path that points upward to the mockery of public eminence, when looked upon by a soul that has any real elements of wise or noble, unless we have an impulse within which mortification chills not; a reward without, which selfish defeat does not destroy.

But, unblessed by one friend really wise or good, spoiled by the world, soured by disappointment, Godolphin's very faculties made him inert, and his very wisdom taught him to be useless. Again and again—as the spider in some cell where no winged insect ever wanders, builds and rebuilds its mesh—the scheming heart of the Idealist was doomed to weave net after net for those visions of the Lovely and the Perfect which never can descend to the gloomy regions wherein mortality is cast. The most common disease to genius is nympholepsy—the saddening for a spirit that the world knows not. Ah! how those outward disappointments which should cure, only feed the disease!

The dinner at Saville's was gay and lively, as such entertainments with such participators usually are. If nothing in the world is more heavy than your formal banquet, nothing, on the other hand, is more agreeable than those well-chosen *laisses aller* feasts at which the guests are as happily selected as the wines; where there is no form, no reserve, no effort; and people, having met to sit still for a few hours, are willing to be as pleasant to each other as if they were never to

meet again. Yet the conversation in all companies not literary turns upon persons rather than things, and your wits learn their art only in the School for Scandal.

"Only think, Fanny," said Saville, "of Clavers turning beau in his old age! He commenced with being a jockey; then he became an electioneerer; then a Methodist parson; then a builder of houses; and now he has dashed suddenly up to London, rushed into the clubs, mounted a wig, studied an ogle, and walks about the Opera House swinging a cane, and, at the age of fifty-six, punching young minors in the side, and saying tremulously, '*We* young fellows!'"

"He hires pages to come to him in the Park with three-cornered notes," said Fanny: "he opens each with affected *nonchalance;* looks full at the bearer; and cries aloud, 'Tell your mistress I cannot refuse her:' then canters off with the air of a man persecuted *à la mort!*"

"But did you see what an immense pair of whiskers Chester has mounted?"

"Yes," answered a Mr. De Lacy; "A—— says he has cultivated them in order to 'plant out' his ugliness."

"But vy *you* no talk, Monsieur de Dauphin?" said the Linettini, gently, turning to Percy; "you ver silent."

"Unhappily, I have been so long out of town, that these anecdotes of the day are *caviare* to me."

"But so," cried Saville, "would a volume of French Memoirs be to any one that took it up for the first time; yet the French Memoirs amuse one exactly as much as if one had lived with the persons written of. Now that ought to be the case with conversations upon persons. I flatter myself, Fanny, that you and I hit off characters so well by a word or two, that no one who hears us wants to know anything more about them."

"I believe you," said Godolphin; "and that is the reason you never talk of yourselves."

"Bah! *Apropos* of egotists, did you meet Jack Barabel in Rome?"

"Yes, writing his travels. 'Pray,' said he to me (seizing me by the button), in the Colisseum, 'what do you think is the highest order of literary composition?' 'Why, an epic, I fancy,' said I; 'or perhaps a tragedy, or a great history, or a novel like *Don Quixote*.' 'Pooh!' quoth Barabel, looking important, 'there's nothing so high in literature as a good book of travels;' then sinking his voice into a whisper, and laying his finger wisely on his nose, he hissed out, '*I* have a quarto, sir, in the press!'"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Stracey, the old wit, picking his teeth, and speaking for the first time; "if you tell Barabel you have seen a handsome woman, he says, mysteriously frowning, 'Handsome, sir! Has she *travelled?*—answer me that!'"

"But have you seen Paulton's new equipage? Brown carriage, brown liveries, brown harness, brown horses, while Paulton and his wife sit within dressed in brown, *cap-à-pié*. The best of it is, that Paulton went to his coachmaker to order his carriage, saying, 'Mr. Houlditch, I am growing old—too old to be eccentric any longer; I must have something remarkably plain;' and to this hour Paulton goes *brown*-ing about the town, crying out to every one, 'Nothing like simplicity, believe me.'"

"He discharged his coachman for wearing white gloves instead of brown," said Stracey. "'What do you mean, sir,' cried he, 'with your d—d showy vulgarities? Don't you see me toiling my soul out to be plain and quiet, and you must spoil all by not being *brown* enough!'"

"Ah, Godolphin, you seem pensive," whispered Fanny; "yet we are tolerably amusing, too."

"My dear Fanny," answered Godolphin, rousing himself, "the dialogue is gay, the actors know their parts, the lights are brilliant; but the scene—the scene cannot shift for me! Call it what you will, I am not deceived. I see the paint and the canvass, but—and yet, away these thoughts! Shall I fill your glass, Fanny?"

CHAPTER XXI.

AN EVENT OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE PRINCIPAL ACTORS IN THIS HISTORY.—GODOLPHIN A SECOND TIME LEAVES ENGLAND.

Godolphin was welcomed with enthusiasm by the London world. His graces, his manners, his genius, his *bon ton*, and his *bonnes fortunes*, were the theme of every society. Verses imputed to him—some erroneously, some truly—were mysteriously circulated from hand to hand; and every one envied the fair inspirers to whom they were supposed to be addressed.

It is not my intention to reiterate the wearisome echo of novelists, who descant on fashion and term it life. No description of rose-coloured curtains and buhl cabinets—no miniature paintings of boudoirs and salons—no recital of conventional insipidities, interlarded with affected criticisms, and honoured by the name of dramatic dialogue, shall lend their fascination to these pages. Far other and far deeper aims are mine in stooping to delineate the customs and springs of polite life. The reader must give himself wholly up to me; he must prepare to go with me through the grave as through the gay, and unresistingly to thread the dark and subtle interest which alone I can impart to these memoirs, or—let him close the book at once. I promise him novelty; but it is not, when duly scanned, a novelty of a light and frivolous cast.

But, throughout that routine of dissipation in which he chased the phantom Forgetfulness, Godolphin sighed for the time he had fixed on for leaving the scenes in which it was pursued. Of Constance's present existence he heard nothing; of her former triumphs and conquests he heard everywhere. And when did he ever meet one face, however fair, which could awaken a single thought of admiration, while hers was yet all

faithfully glassed in his remembrance? I know nothing that so utterly converts society into "the gallery of pictures," as the recollection of one loved and lost. That recollection has but two cures—Time and the Hermitage. Foreigners impute to us the turn for sentiment; alas! there are no people who have it less. We seek for ever after amusement; and there is not one popular prose-book in our language in which the more tender and yearning secrets of the heart form the subject matter. The "Corinne" and the "Julie" weary us, or we turn them into sorry jests!

One evening, a little before his departure from England—that a lingering and vague hope, of which Constance was the object, had considerably protracted beyond the allotted time—Godolphin was at a house in which the hostess was a relation to Lord Erpingham.

"Have you heard," asked Lady G——, "that my cousin Erpingham is to be married?"

"No, indeed: to whom?" said Godolphin, eagerly.

"To Miss Vernon."

Sudden as was the shock, Godolphin heard, and changed neither hue nor muscle.

"Are you certain of this?" asked a lady present.

"Quite: Lady Erpingham is my authority; I received the news from herself this very day."

"And does she seem pleased with the match?"

"Why, I can scarcely say, for the letter contradicts itself in every passage. Now she congratulates herself on having so charming a daughter-in-law; now she suddenly stops short to observe what a pity it is that young men should be so precipitate! Now she says what a great match it will be for her dear ward! and now, what a happy one it will be for Erpingham! In short, she does not know whether to be pleased or vexed; and that, *pour dire vrai*, is my case also."

"Why, indeed," observed the former speaker, "Miss Vernon has played her cards well. Lord Erpingham would have been a great match in himself, with his person and reputation. Ah! she was always an ambitious girl."

"And a proud one," said Lady G——. "Well, I suppose Erpingham House will be the rendezvous to all the Blues, and wits, and *savans*. Miss Vernon is another *Aspasia*, I hear."

"I hate girls who are so designing," said the lady who spoke before, and had only one daughter, very ugly, who, at the age of thirty-five, was about to accept her first offer, and marry a younger son in the Guards. "I think she's rather vulgar; for my part, I doubt if—I shall patronise her."

"Well, what do *you* think of it, Mr. Godolphin? You have seen Miss Vernon?"

Godolphin was gone.

It was about ten days after this conversation that Godolphin, waiting at a hotel in Dover the hour at which the packet set sail for Calais, took up the "Morning Post," and the first passage that met his eye was the one which I transcribe:

"*Marriage in High Life.*—On Thursday last, at Wendover Castle, the Earl of Erpingham to Constance, only daughter of the celebrated Mr. Vernon. The bride was dressed, &c.—" And then followed the trite yet pompous pageantry of words—the sounding nothings—with which ladies who become countesses are knelled into marriage.

"The dream is over!" said Godolphin, mournfully, as the paper fell to the ground; and, burying his face within his hands, he remained motionless till they came to announce the moment of departure.

And thus Percy Godolphin left, for the second time, his native shores. When we return to him, what changes will the feelings, now awakened within him, have worked in his character! The drops that trickle within the cavern harden, yet brighten into spars as they indurate. Nothing is more polished, nothing more cold, than that wisdom which is the work of former tears, of former passions, and is formed within a musing and solitary mind!

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BRIDE ALONE.—A DIALOGUE POLITICAL AND MATRIMONIAL.—CONSTANCE'S GENIUS FOR DIPLOMACY.—THE CHARACTER OF HER ASSEMBLIES.—HER CONQUEST OVER LADY DELVILLE.

"BRING me that book; place that table nearer; and leave me."

The abigail obeyed the orders, and the young Countess of Erpingham was alone. Alone! what a word for a young and beautiful bride in the first months of her marriage! Alone, and in the heart of that mighty city, in which rank and wealth—and they were hers—are the idols all worship, all throng around.

It was a room fancifully and splendidly decorated. Flowers and perfumes were, however, its chief luxury; and from the open window you might see the trees in the old Mall deepening into the rich verdure of June. That haunt, too—a classical haunt for London—was, at the hour I speak of, full of gay and idle life; and there was something fresh and joyous in the air, the sun, and the crowd of foot and horse that swept below.

Was the glory gone from your brow, Constance? or the proud gladness from your eye? Alas! are not the blessings of the world like the enchanted bullets? that which pierces our heart is united with the gift which our heart desired!

Lord Erpingham entered the room. "Well, Constance," said he, "shall you ride on horseback to-day?"

"I think not."

"Then I wish you would call on Lady Delville. You see, Delville is of my party: we set together. You should be very civil to her, and I did not think you were so the other night."

"You wish Lady Delville to support your political

interest; and, if I mistake not, you think her at present lukewarm?"

"Precisely."

"Then, my dear lord, will you place confidence in my discretion? I promise you, if you will leave me undisturbed in my plans, that Lady Delville shall be the most devoted of your party before the season is half over: but then the means will not be those you advise."

"Why, I advised none."

"Yes—civility; a very poor policy."

"D—n it, Constance! why, you would not *frown* a great person like Lady Delville into affection for us?"

"Leave it to me."

"Nonsense!"

"My dear lord, only try. Three months is all I ask. You will leave the management of politics to me ever afterward! I was born a schemer. Am I not John Vernon's daughter?"

"Well, well, do as you will!" said Lord Erpingham: "but I see how it will end. However, you will call on Lady Delville to-day?"

"If you wish it, certainly."

"I do."

Lady Delville was a proud, great lady; not very much liked, and not so often invited by her equals as if she had been agreeable and a flirt.

Constance knew with whom she had to treat. She called on Lady Delville that day. Lady Delville was at home: a pretty and popular Mrs. Trevor was with her.

Lady Delville received her coolly: Constance was haughtiness itself.

"You go to the Duchess of Daubigny's to-night?" said Lady Delville, in the course of their broken conversation.

"Indeed I do not. I like agreeable society. It shall be my object to form a circle that not one displeasing person shall obtain access to. Will you assist me, my dear Mrs. Trevor?" and Constance turned, with her softest smile, to the lady she addressed.

Mrs. Trevor was flattered: Lady Delville drew herself up.

"It is a small party at the duchess's," said the latter, "merely to meet the Duke and Duchess of C——."

"Ah! few people are capable of giving a suitable entertainment to the royal family."

"But surely none more so than the Duchess of Daubigny: her house so large, her rank so great!"

"These are but poor ingredients towards the forming of an agreeable party," said Constance, coldly. "The mistake made by common minds is to suppose titles the only rank. Royal dukes love, above all other persons, to be amused; and amusement is the last thing generally provided for them."

The conversation fell into other channels. Constance rose to depart. She warmly pressed the hand of Mrs. Trevor, whom she had only seen once before.

"A few persons come to me to-morrow evening," said she; "*do* wave ceremony, and join us. I can promise you that not one disagreeable person shall be present; and that the Duchess of Daubigny shall write for an invitation, and be refused."

Mrs. Trevor accepted the invitation.

Lady Delville was enraged beyond measure. Never was female tongue more bitter than hers at the expense of that insolent Lady Erpingham! Yet Lady Delville was secretly in grief; for the first time in her life, she was hurt at not having been asked to a party: and, being hurt because she was not going, she longed most eagerly to go.

The next evening came. Erpingham House was not large, but it was well adapted to the description of assembly its beautiful owner had invited. Statues, busts, pictures, books, scattered or arranged about the apartments, furnished matter for intellectual conversation, or gave, at least, an intellectual air to the meeting.

About a hundred persons were present. They were culled from the most distinguished ornaments of the time. Musicians, painters, authors, orators, fine gentlemen, dukes, princes, and beauties. One thing, how-

ever, was imperatively necessary in order to admit them —the profession of liberal opinions. No Tory, however wise, eloquent, or beautiful, could have obtained the *sesame* to those apartments.

Constance never seemed more lovely, and never before was she so winning. The coldness and the arrogance of her manner were wholly vanished. To every one she spoke, and to every one her voice, her manner, were kind, cordial, familiar; but familiar with a soft dignity that heightened the charm. Ambitious not only to please but to dazzle, she breathed into her conversation all the grace and culture of her mind. They who admired her the most were the most accomplished themselves. Now exchanging with foreign nobles that brilliant trifling of the world in which there is often so much penetration, wisdom, and research into character; now with a kindling eye and animated cheek commenting with poets and critics on literature and the arts; now, in a more remote and quiet corner, seriously discussing, with hoary politicians, those affairs in which even they allowed her shrewdness and her grasp of intellect; and combining with every grace and every accomplishment a rare and dazzling order of beauty—we may readily imagine the sensation she created, and the sudden and novel zest which so splendid an Armida must have given to the tameness of society.

The whole of the next week the party at Erpingham House was the theme of every conversation. Each person who had been there had met the *lion* he had been most anxious to see. The beauty had conversed with the poet who had charmed her; the young *débutant* in science had paid homage to the great professor of its loftiest mysteries; the statesman had thanked the author who had defended his measures; the author had been delighted with the compliment of the statesman. Every one then agreed that, while the highest rank in the kingdom had been there, rank had been the least attraction; and those who before had found Constance repellant, were the very persons who now expatiated with the greatest rapture on the sweet-

ness of her manners. Then, too, every one who had been admitted to the *coterie* dwelt on the *rarity* of the admission; and thus all the world were dying for an introduction to Erpingham House—partly because it was agreeable, principally because it was difficult.

It soon became a compliment to the understanding to say of a person, "He goes to Lady Erpingham's!" They who valued themselves on their understandings moved heaven and earth to become popular with the beautiful countess. Lady Delville was not asked; Lady Delville was furious: she affected disdain, but no one gave her credit for it. Lord Erpingham teased Constance on this point.

"You see I was right, for you have affronted Lady Delville. She has made Delville look coolly on me; in a few weeks he will be a Tory: think of that, Lady Erpingham!"

"One month more," answered Constance, with a smile, "and you shall see."

One night Lady Delville and Lady Erpingham met at a large party. The latter seated herself by her haughty enemy: not seeming to heed her coolness, Constance entered into conversation with her. She dwelt upon books, pictures, music: her manner was animated, and her wit playful. Pleased in spite of herself, Lady Delville warmed from her reserve.

"My dear Lady Delville," said Constance, suddenly turning her bright countenance on the Whig countess with an expression of delighted surprise, "will you forgive me? I never dreamed before that you were so charming a person! I never conceal my sentiments: and I own, with regret and shame, that, till this moment, I had never seen in your mind, whatever I might in your person, those claims to admiration which were constantly dinned into my ear."

Lady Delville actually coloured.

"Pray," continued Constance, "condescend to permit me to a nearer acquaintance. Will you dine with us on Thursday? We shall have only nine persons besides yourself: but they are the nine persons whom I most esteem and admire."

Lady Delville accepted the invitation. From that hour Lady Delville—who had at first resented, from the deepest recess of her heart, Constance Vernon's accession to rank and wealth—who, had Constance deferred to her early acquaintance, would have always found something in her she could have affected to despise—from that hour Lady Delville was the warmest advocate, and, a little time after, the sincerest follower, of the youthful countess.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN INSIGHT INTO THE REAL GRAND MONDE; BEING A SEARCH BEHIND THE ROSE-COLOURED CURTAINS.

THE time we now speak of was the most brilliant the English world, during the last half century, has known. Lord Byron was in his brief and dazzling zenith; De Staël was in London; the Peace had turned the attention of rich idlers to social enjoyment and to letters. There was an excitement, and a brilliancy, and a *spirituality* about our circles which we do not recognise now. Never had a young and ambitious woman—a beauty and a genius—a finer moment for the commencement of her power. It was Constance's early and bold resolution to push to the utmost—even to exaggeration—a power existing in all polished states, but now mostly in this—the power of Fashion! This mysterious and subtle engine she was eminently skilled to move according to her will. Her intuitive penetration into character, her tact, and her grace, were exactly the talents Fashion most demands; and they were at present devoted only to that sphere. The rudeness that she mingled, at times, with the bewitching softness and ease of manner she could command at others, increased the effect of her power. It is

much to intimidate as well as to win. And her rudeness in a very little while grew popular; for it was never exercised but on those whom the world loves to see humbled. Modest merit in any rank, and even insolence, if accompanied with merit, were always safe from her satire. It was the *hauteur* of foolish duchesses or purse-proud *roturiers* that she loved, and scrupled not to abase.

And the independence of her character was mixed with extraordinary sweetness of temper. Constance could not be in a passion: it was out of her nature. If she was stung, she could utter a sarcasm, but she could not frown or exalt her voice. There was that magic in her that she was always feminine. She did not stare young men out of countenance; she never addressed them by their Christian names; she never flirted, never coquetted: the bloom and flush of modesty was yet all virgin upon her youth. She, the founder of a new dynasty, avoided what her successors and contemporaries have deemed it necessary to incur. She was the leader of fashion; but—it is a miraculous union—she was respectable!

At this period some new dances were brought into England. These dances found much favour in the eyes of several great ladies young enough to dance them. They met at each other's houses in the morning to practise the steps. Among these was Lady Erpingham; her house became the favourite rendezvous.

The young Marquis of Dartington was one of the little knot. Celebrated for his great fortune, his personal beauty, and his general success, he resolved to fall in love with Lady Erpingham. He devoted himself exclusively to her; he joined her in the morning in her rides—in the evening in her gayeties. He had fallen in love with her?—yes! Did he love her?—not the least. But he was excessively idle!—what else could he do?

Constance early saw the attentions and designs of Lord Dartington. There is one difficulty in repressing advances in great society—one so easily becomes ri-

diculous by being a prude. But Constance dismissed Lord Dartington with great dexterity. This was the occasion:

One of the apartments in Erpingham House communicated with a conservatory. In this conservatory Constance was alone one morning, when Lord Dartington, who had entered the house with Lord Erpingham, joined her. He was not a man who could ever become sentimental; he was rather the gay lover—rather the *Don Gaolor* than the *Amadis;* but he was a little abashed before Constance. He trusted, however, to his fine eyes and his good complexion; plucked up courage; and, picking a flower from the same plant Constance was tending, said,

"I believe there is a custom in some part of the world to express love by flowers. May I, dear Lady Erpingham, trust to this flower to express what I dare not utter?"

Constance did not blush nor look confused, as Lord Dartington had hoped and expected. One who had been loved by Godolphin was not likely to feel much agitation at the gallantry of Lord Dartington; but she looked gravely in his face, paused a little before she answered, and then said, with a smile that abashed the suiter more than severity could possibly have done,

"My dear Lord Dartington, do not let us mistake each other. I live in the world like other women, but I am not altogether like them. Not another word of gallantry to me alone, as you value my friendship. In a crowded room, pay me as many compliments as you like. It will flatter my vanity to have you in my train. And now, just do me the favour to take these scissors and cut the dead leaves off that plant."

Lord Dartington, to use a common phrase, "hummed and hawed." He looked, too, a little angry. An artful and shrewd politician, it was not Constance's wish to cool the devotion, though she might the attachment, of a single member of her husband's party. With a kind look—but a look so superior, so queenlike, so free from the petty and coquettish condescension of the sex, that

the gay lord wondered from that hour how he could ever have dreamed of Constance as of certain other ladies of rank (*id est*, of pleasure)—she stretched her hand to him.

"We are friends, Lord Dartington? and, now we know each other, we shall be so always."

Lord Dartington bowed confusedly over the beautiful hand he touched; and Constance, walking into the drawing-room, sent for Lord Erpingham on business: Dartington took his leave.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MARRIED STATE OF CONSTANCE.

Constance, countess of Erpingham, was young, rich, lovely as a dream, worshipped as a goddess. Was she happy? and was her whole heart occupied with the trifles that surrounded her?

Deep within her memory was buried one fatal image that she could not exorcise. The reproaching and mournful countenance of Godolphin rose before her at all times and seasons. The charm of his presence no other human being could renew. His eloquent and noble features, living and glorious with genius and with passion; his sweet, deep voice; his conversation, so rich with mind and knowledge, and the subtle delicacy with which he applied its graces to some sentiment dedicated to her (delicious flattery, of all flatteries the most attractive to a sensitive and intellectual woman!)—these occurred to her again and again, and rendered all she saw around her flat, wearisome, insipid. Nor was this deep-seated and tender weakness the only serpent—if I may use so confused a metaphor—in the roses of her lot.

And here I invoke the reader's graver attention. The fate of women in all the more polished circles of

society is eminently unnatural and unhappy. The peasant and his dame are on terms of equality—equality even of ambition: no career is open to one and shut to the other—equality even of hardship, and hardship is employment: no labour occupies the whole energies of the man, but leaves those of the woman unemployed. Is this the case with the wives in a higher station? the wives of the lawyer, the merchant, the senator, the noble? There the men have their occupations, and the women (unless, like poor Fanny, work-bags and parrots can employ them) none. They are idle. They employ the imagination and the heart. They fall in love and are wretched; or they remain virtuous, and are either wearied by an eternal monotony, or they fritter away intellect, mind, character, in the minutest frivolities—frivolities being their only refuge from stagnation. Yes! there is one very curious curse for the sex which men don't consider! Once married, the more aspiring of them have no real scope for ambition: the ambition gnaws away their content, and never finds elsewhere wherewithal to feed on.

This was Constance's especial misfortune. Her lofty, and restless, and soaring spirit pined for a sphere of action, and ballrooms and boudoirs met it on every side. One hope she did indeed cherish; that hope was the source of her intriguings and schemes, of her care for seeming trifles, the waste of her energies on seeming frivolities. This hope, this object, was to diminish, to crush, not only the party which had forsaken her father, but the power of that order to which she belonged herself—which she had entered only to humble. But this hope was a distant and chill vision. She was too rational to anticipate an early and effectual change in our social state, and too rich in the treasures of mind to be the creature of one idea. Satiety—the common curse of the great—crept over her day by day. The powers within her lay stagnant—the keen intellect rusted in its sheath.

"How is it," said she to the beautiful Countess of ——, "that you seem always so gay and so animated;

that, with all your vivacity and tenderness, you are never at a loss for occupation? You never seem weary—*ennuyée*—why is this?"

"I will tell you," said the pretty countess, archly; "I change my lovers every month." Constance blushed, and asked no more.

Many women in her state, influenced by contagious example, wearied by a life in which the heart had no share; without children, without a guide; assailed and wooed on all sides, in all shapes—many women might have ventured, if not into love, at least into coquetry. But Constance remained as bright and cold as ever—"the unsunned snow." It might be, indeed, that the memory of Godolphin preserved her safe from all lesser dangers. The asbestos, once conquered by fire, can never be consumed by it; but there was also another cause in Constance's very nature—it was pride!

Oh! if men could but dream of what a proud woman endures in those caresses which humble her, they would not wonder why proud women are so difficult to subdue. This is a matter on which we all ponder much, but we dare not write honestly upon it. But imagine a young, haughty, guileless beauty, married to a man whom she neither loves nor honours; and so far from that want of love rendering her likely to fall hereafter, it is more probable that it will make her recoil from the very name of love.

About this time the Dowager Lady Erpingham died; an event sincerely mourned by Constance, and which broke the strongest tie that united the young countess to her lord. Lord Erpingham and Constance, indeed, now saw but little of each other. Like most men six feet high, with large black whiskers, he was vain of his person; and, like most rich noblemen, he found plenty of ladies who assured him he was irresistible. He had soon grown angry at the unadmiring and calm urbanity of Constance; and, living a great deal with single men, he formed *liaisons* of the same order they do. He was, however, sensible that he had been fortunate in the choice of a wife. His political impor-

tance the wisdom of Constance had quadrupled, at the least; his house she had rendered the most brilliant in London, and his name the most courted in the lists of the peerage. Though munificent, she was not extravagant; though a beauty, she did not intrigue; neither, though his inconstancy was open, did she appear jealous; nor, whatever the errors of his conduct, did she ever disregard his interest, disobey his wishes, or waver from the smooth and continuous sweetness of her temper. Of such a wife Lord Erpingham could not complain: he esteemed her, praised her, asked her advice, and stood a little in awe of her.

Ah, Constance! had you been the daughter of a noble or a peasant—had you been the daughter of any man but John Vernon—what a treasure beyond price, without parallel, would that heart, that beauty, that genius have been!

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PLEASURE OF RETALIATING HUMILIATION.—CONSTANCE'S DEFENCE OF FASHION.—REMARKS ON FASHION.—GODOLPHIN'S WHEREABOUT.—FANNY MILLINGER'S CHARACTER OF HERSELF.—WANT OF COURAGE IN MORALISTS.

It was a proud moment for Constance when the Duchess of Winstoun and Lady Margaret Midgecombe wrote to her, worried her, beset her, for a smile, a courtesy, an invitation, or a ticket to Almack's.

They had at first thought to cry her down; to declare that she was plebeian, mad, *bizarre*, and a Blue. It was all in vain. Constance rose every hour. They struggled against the conviction, but it would not do. The first person who confounded them with the sense

of their error was the late king, then regent; he devoted himself to Lady Erpingham for a whole evening at a ball given by himself. From that hour they were assured they had been wrong: they accordingly called on her the next day. Constance received them with the same coldness she had always evinced; but they went away declaring they never saw any one whose manners were so improved. They then sent her an invitation! she refused it; a second! she refused; a third, begging her to fix the day!!! she fixed the day, and disappointed them. Lord bless us! how sorry they were, how alarmed, how terrified! their dear Lady Erpingham must be ill! they sent every day for the next week to know how she was!

"Why," said Mrs. Trevor to Lady Erpingham, "why do you continue so cruel to these poor people? I know they were very impertinent, and so forth, once; but it is surely wiser and more dignified now to forgive, to appear unconscious of the past: people of the world ought not to quarrel with each other."

"You are right, and yet you are mistaken," said Constance: "I do forgive, and I don't quarrel; but my opinion, my contempt, remain the same, or are, rather, more disdainful than ever. These people are not worth losing the luxury we all experience in expressing contempt. I continue, therefore, but quietly and without affectation, to indulge that luxury. Besides, I own to you, my dear Mrs. Trevor, I do think that the mere insolence of titles must fairly and thoroughly be put down, if we sincerely wish to render society agreeable; and where can we find a better example for punishment than the Duchess of Winstoun?"

"But, my dear Lady Erpingham, *you* are thought insolent: your friend, Lady ——, is called insolent too: are you sure the charge is not merited?"

"I allow the justice of the charge; but, you will observe, ours is not the insolence of rank: we have made it a point to protect, to the utmost, the poor and unfriended of all circles. Are *we* ever rude to governesses or companions, or poor writers or musicians?

When a man marries below him, do we turn our backs on the poor wife? Do we not, on the contrary, lavish our attention on her, and throw round her equivocal and joyless state the protection of Fashion? No, no! *our* insolence is JUSTICE! it is the chalice returned to the lips which prepared it; it is insolence to the insolent: reflect, and you will allow it."

The fashion that Constance set and fostered was of a generous order, but it was not suited to the majority: it was corrupted by her followers into a thousand baseness. In vain do we make a law if the general spirit is averse to the law. Constance could humble the great, could loosen the links of extrinsic rank, could undermine the power of titles, but that was all! She could abase the proud, but not elevate the general tone: for one slavery she only substituted another; people hugged the chains of Fashion, as before they hugged those of Titular Arrogance.

Amid the gossip of the day, Constance heard much of Godolphin, and all spoke of him with interest—even those who could not comprehend his very intricate and peculiar character. Separated from her by lands and seas, there seemed no danger in allowing herself the sweet pleasure of hearing his actions and his mind discussed. She fancied she did not permit herself to *love* him; she was too pure not to start at such an idea; but her mind was not so regulated, so trained and educated in sacred principle, that she forbade herself the luxury to *remember*. Of his present mode of life she heard little. He was traced from city to city; from shore to shore; from the haughty noblesse of Vienna to the gloomy shrines of Memphis, by occasional report, and seemed to tarry long in no place. This roving and unsettled life, which secretly assured her of her power, suffused his image in all tender and remorseful dyes. Ah! where is that one person to be envied, could we read the heart!

The actress had heard incidentally from Saville of Godolphin's attachment to the beautiful countess. She longed to see her; and when, one night at the theatre,

she was informed that Lady Erpingham was in the lord-chamberlain's box close before her, she could scarcely command her self-possession sufficiently to perform with her wonted brilliancy of effect.

She was greatly struck by the singular nobleness of Lady Erpingham's face and person; and Godolphin rose in her estimation, from the justice of the homage he had rendered to so fair a shrine. What a curious trait, by-the-by, that is in women; their exaggerated anxiety to see one who has been loved by the man in whom they themselves take interest; and the manner in which the said man rises or falls in their estimation, according as they admire, or are disappointed in, the object of his love.

"And so," said Saville, supping one night with the actress, "you think the world does not overlaud Lady Erpingham?"

"No: she is what Medea would have been, if innocent—full of majesty, and yet of sweetness. It is the face of a queen of some three thousand years back. I could have worshipped her."

"My little Fanny, you are a strange creature. Methinks you have a dash of poetry in you."

"Nobody who has not written poetry could ever read my character," answered Fanny, with *naïveté*, yet with truth.

"Yet you have not much of the ideal about you, pretty one."

"No; because I was so early thrown on myself that I was forced to make independence my chief good. I soon saw that, if I followed my heart to and fro wherever it led me, I should be the creature of every breath, the victim of every accident: I should have been the very fool of romance; lived on a smile; and died, perhaps, in a ditch at last. Accordingly, I set to work with my feelings, and pared and cut them down to a convenient compass. Happy for me that I did so! What would have become of me if, years ago, when I loved Godolphin, I had thrown the whole world of my heart upon him?"

"Why, he has generosity: he would not have deserted you."

"But I should have wearied him," answered Fanny, "and that would have been quite enough for me. But I did love him well, and purely—(ah! you may smile!)—and disinterestedly. I was only fortified in my resolution not to love any one too much, by perceiving that he had *affection* but no *sympathy* for me. His nature was different from mine. I am *woman* in everything, and Godolphin is always sighing for a *goddess!*"

"I should like to sketch your character, Fanny. It is original, though not strongly marked. I never met with it in any book, yet it is true to your sex and to the world."

"Few people could paint me exactly," answered Fanny. "The danger is, that they would make too much or too little of me. But, such as I am, the world ought to know what is so common, and, as you think, so undescribed."

And now, beautiful Constance, farewell for the present! I leave you surrounded by power, and pomp, and adulation. Enjoy, as you may, that for which you sacrificed affection!

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE VISIONARY AND HIS DAUGHTER.—AN ENGLISHMAN, SUCH AS FOREIGNERS IMAGINE THE ENGLISH.

We must now present the reader to characters very different from those which have hitherto passed before his eye.

Without the immortal city, along the Appia Via, there dwelt a singular and romantic visionary, of the name of Volktman. He was by birth a Dane; and Nature had bestowed on him that frame of mind which

might have won him a distinguished life, had she placed the period of his birth in the eleventh century. Volktman was essentially a man belonging to the past time: the character of his enthusiasm was weird and Gothic; with beings of the present day he had no sympathy; their loves, their hatreds, their politics, their literature, awoke no echo in his breast. He did not affect to herd with them; his life was solitude, and its occupation study—a study of that nature, which every day unfitted him more and more for the purposes of existence. In a word, he was a reader of the stars; a believer in the occult and dreamy science of astrology. Bred up to the art of sculpture, he had early in life sought Rome as the nurse of inspiration; but even then he had brought with him the dark and brooding temper of his northern tribe. The images of the classic world—the bright, and cold, and beautiful divinities, whose natures as well as shapes the marble simulation of life is so especially adapted to represent—spoke but little to Volktman's preoccupied and gloomy imagination. Faithful to the superstitions and the warriors of the North, the loveliness and majesty of the Southern creations but called forth in him the desire to apply the principles by which they were formed to the imbodying those stern visions which his haggard and dim fancies only could evoke. This train of inspiration preserved him, at least, from the deadliest vice in a worshipper of the arts—commonplace. He was no servile and trite imitator; his very faults were solemn and commanding. But, before he had gained that long experience which can alone perfect genius, his natural energies were directed to new channels. In an illness which prevented his applying to his art, he had accidentally sought entertainment in a certain work upon astrology. The wild and imposing theories of the science—if science it may be called—especially charmed and invited him. The clear bright nights of his fatherland were brought back to his remembrance; he recalled the mystic and analyzed impressions with which he had gazed upon the lights of heaven; and he imagined that the very

vagueness of his feelings was a proof of the certainty of the science.

The sons of the North are pre-eminently liable to be affected by that romance of emotion which the hushed and starry aspect of night is calculated to excite. The long-unbroken, luxurious silence that, in their frozen climate, reigns from the going down of the sun to its rise; the wandering and sudden meteors that disport, as with an impish life, along the noiseless and solemn heaven; the peculiar radiance of the stars, and even the steril and severe features of the earth, which they light up with their chill and ghostly serenity, serve to deepen the effect of the wizard tales which are instilled into the ear of childhood, and to connect the less known and more visionary impulses of life with the influences, or, at least, with the associations of Night and Heaven.

To Volktman, more alive than even his countrymen are wont to superstitious impressions, the science on which he had chanced came with an all-absorbing interest and fascination. He surrendered himself wholly up to his new pursuit. By degrees, the block and the chisel were neglected; and, though he still worked from time to time, he ceased to consider the sculptor's art as the vocation of his life and the end of his ambition. Fortunately, though not rich, Volktman was not without the means of existence, nor even without the decent and proper comforts; so that he was enabled, as few men are, to indulge his ardour for unprofitable speculations, albeit to the exclusion of lucrative pursuits. It may be noted, that when a man is addicted to an occupation that withdraws him from the world, any great affliction tends to confirm, without hope of cure, his inclinations to solitude. The world, distasteful in that it gave no pleasure, becomes irremediably hateful when it is coupled with the remembrance of pain. Volktman had married an Italian, a woman who loved him entirely, and whom he loved with that strong though uncaressing affection common to men of his peculiar temper. Of the gay and social habits and constitution

of her country, the Italian was not disposed to suffer the astrologer to dwell only among the stars. She sought, playfully and kindly, to attract him towards human society; and Volktman could not always resist—as what man earthborn can do?—the influence of the fair presider over his house and hearth. It happened that, on one day in which she peculiarly wished his attendance at some one of those parties in which Englishmen think the notion of festivity strange—for it includes conversation—Volktman had foretold the menace of some great misfortune. Uncertain, from the character of the prediction, whether to wish his wife to remain at home or to go abroad, he yielded to her wish, and accompanied her to her friend's house. A young Englishman lately arrived at Rome, and already celebrated in the circles of that city for his eccentricity of life and his passion for beauty, was of the party. He appeared struck with the sculptor's wife; and in his attentions, Volktman for the first and the last time experienced the pangs of jealousy: he hurried his wife away.

On their return home, whether or not a jewel worn by the signora had attracted the cupidity of some of the lawless race who live through gaining, and profiting by, such information, they were attacked by two robbers in the obscure and ill-lighted suburb. Though Volktman offered no resistance, the manner of their assailants was rude and violent. The signora was fearfully alarmed; her shrieks brought a stranger to their assistance; it was the English youth who had so alarmed the jealousy of Volktman. Accustomed to danger in his profession of a gallant, the Englishman seldom, in those foreign lands, went from home at night without the protection of pistols. At the sight of firearms the ruffians felt their courage evaporate; they fled from their prey; and the Englishman assisted Volktman in conveying the Italian to her home. But the terror of the encounter operated fatally on a delicate frame, and within three weeks from that night Volktman was a widower.

His marriage had been blessed with but one daughter, who, at the time of this catastrophe, was about eight years of age. His love for his child in some measure reconciled Volktman to life; and as the shock of the event subsided, he returned, with a pertinacity which was now subjected to no interruption, to his beloved occupations and mysterious researches. One visiter alone found it possible to win frequent ingress to his seclusion; it was the young Englishman. A sentiment of remorse at the jealous feelings he had experienced, and for which his wife, though an Italian, had never given him even the shadow of a cause, had softened into a feeling rendered kind by the associations of the deceased, and a vague desire to atone to her for an unacknowledged error, the dislike he had at first conceived against the young man. This was rapidly confirmed by the gentle and winning manners of the stranger, by his attentions to the deceased, to whom he had sent an English physician of great skill (perhaps the only practitioner in the city *not* ignorant); and, as their acquaintance expanded, by the animated interest which he testified in the darling theories of the astrologer.

It happened also that Volktman's mother had been the daughter of Scotch parents. She had taught him the English tongue; and it was the only language, save his own, which he spoke as a native. This circumstance tended greatly to facilitate his intercourse with the traveller; and he found in the society of a man ardent, sensitive, melancholy, and addicted to all abstract contemplation, a pleasure which, among the keen but uncultivated intellects of Italy, he had never enjoyed.

Frequently, then, came the young Englishman to the lone house on the Appia Via; and the mysterious and unearthly conversation of the starry visionary afforded to him, who had early learned to scrutinize the varieties of his kind, a strange delight, heightened by the contrast it presented to the worldly natures with which he usually associated, and the commonplace occupations of a life in pursuit of pleasure.

And there was one who, child as she was, watched the coming of that young and beautiful stranger with emotion beyond her years. Brought up alone; mixing, since her mother's death, with no companions of her age; catching dim and solemn glimpses of her father's wild but lofty speculation; his books, filled with strange characters and imposing "words of mighty sound," open for ever to her young and curious gaze; it can scarce be matter of wonder that something strange and unworldly mingled with the elements of character which Lucilla Volktman early developed—a character that was nature itself, yet of a nature erratic and *bizarre*. Her impulses she obeyed spontaneously, but none fathomed their origin. She was not of a quiet and meek order of mind, but passionate, changeful, and restless. She would laugh and weep without apparent cause; the colour on her cheek never seemed for two minutes the same; and the most fitful changes of an April heaven were immutability itself compared with the play and lustre of expression that undulated in her features, and her wild, deep, eloquent eyes.

Her person resembled her mind; it was beautiful; but the beauty struck you less than the singularity of its character. Her eyes were of a darkness that at night seemed black, but her hair was of the brightest and purest auburn; her complexion, sometimes pale, sometimes radiant even to the flush of a fever, was delicate and clear; her teeth and mouth were lovely beyond all words; her hands and feet were small to a fault; and as she grew up (for we have forestalled her age in this description), her shape, though wanting in height, was in such harmony and proportion, that the mind of the sculptor would sometimes escape from the absorption of the astrologer, and Volktman would gaze upon her with the same admiration that he would have bestowed, in despite of the subject, on the goddess-forms of Phidias or Canova. But then this beauty was accompanied with such endless variety of gesture, often so wild, though always and necessarily

graceful, that the eye ached for that repose requisite for prolonged admiration.

When she was spoken to she did not often answer to the purpose, but rather appeared to reply as to some interrogatory of her own; in the midst of one occupation she would start up to another; leave that, in turn, undone, and sit down in a silence lasting for hours. Her voice, in singing, was exquisitely melodious; she had, too, an intuitive talent for painting; and she read all the books that came in her way with an avidity that bespoke at once the restlessness and the genius of her mind.

This description of Lucilla must, I need scarcely repeat, be considered as applicable to her at some years distant from the time in which the young Englishman first attracted her childish but ardent imagination. To her, that face, with its regular and harmonious features, its golden hair, and soft, shy, melancholy aspect, seemed as belonging to a higher and brighter order of beings than those who, with exaggerated lineaments and swarthy hues, surrounded and displeased her. She took a strange and thrilling pleasure in creeping to his side, and looking up, when unobserved, at the countenance which, in his absence, she loved to imitate with her pencil by day, and to recall in her dreams at night. But she seldom spoke to him, and she shrank, covered with painful blushes, from his arms whenever he attempted to bestow on her those caresses which children are wont to claim as an attention. Once, however, she summoned courage to ask him to teach her English, and he complied. She learned that language with surprising facility; and, as Volktman loved its sound, she grew familiar with its difficulties by always addressing her father in a tongue which became inexpressibly dear to her. And the young stranger delighted to hear that soft and melodious voice, with its trembling Italian accent, make music from the nervous and masculine language of his native land. Scarce accountably to himself, a certain tender and peculiar interest in the fortunes of this sin-

gular and bewitching child grew up within him—peculiar, and not easily accounted for, in that it was not wholly the interest we feel in an engaging child, and yet was of no more interested or sinister order. Were there truth in the science of the stars, I should say that they had told him her fate was to have affinity with his; and in that persuasion, something mysterious, and more than ordinarily tender, entered into the affection he felt for the daughter of his friend.

The Englishman was himself of a romantic character. He had been self-taught; and his studies, irregular, though often deep, had given directions to his intellect frequently enthusiastic and unsound. His imagination preponderated over his judgment; and it was enough to arrest the former, to win his entire devotion to any pursuit, until his natural sagacity proved it deceitful. If at times, living as he did in that daily world which so sharpens our common sense, he smiled at the persevering fervour of the astrologer, he more often shared it; and he became his pupil in "the poetry of heaven," with a secret but deep belief in the mysteries cultivated by his master. Carrying the delusion to its height, I fear that the enthusiasts entered upon ground still more shadowy and benighted—the old secrets of the alchymist, and, perhaps, even of those arcana yet more gloomy and less rational, were subjected to their serious contemplation; and night after night they delivered themselves wholly up to that fearful and charmed fascination which the desire and effort to overleap our mortal boundaries produce even in the hardest and best-regulated minds. The train of thought so long nursed by the abstruse and solitary Dane was perhaps a better apology for the weakness of credulity than the youth and wandering fancy of the Englishman. But the scene around, not alluring to the one, fed to overflowing the romantic aspirations of the other.

On his way home, as the stars (which night had been spent in reading) began to wink and fade, he crossed the haunted Almo, renowned of yore for its healing

virtues, and in whose stream the far-famed *simulacrum* (the image of Cybele), which fell from Heaven, was wont to be laved with every coming spring; and around his steps, till he gained his home, were the relics and monuments of that superstition which sheds so much beauty over all, that in harsh reasoning it may be said to degrade; so that his mind, always peculiarly alive to external impressions, was girt, as it were, with an atmosphere favourable both to the lofty speculation and the graceful credulities of romance.

The Englishman remained at Rome, with slight intervals of absence, for nearly three years. On the night before the day in which he received intelligence of an event that recalled him to his native country, he repaired at an hour accidentally later than usual to the astrologer's abode.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A CONVERSATION LITTLE APPERTAINING TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.—RESEARCHES INTO HUMAN FATE.—THE PREDICTION.

On entering the apartment, he found Lucilla seated on a low stool beside the astrologer. She looked up when she heard his footstep; but her countenance seemed so dejected, that he turned involuntarily to that of Volktman for explanation. Volktman met his gaze with a steadfast and mournful aspect.

"What has happened?" asked the Englishman; "you seem sad; you do not greet me as usual."

"I have been with the stars," replied the visionary.

"They seem but poor company," rejoined the Englishman; "and do not appear to have much heightened your spirits."

"Jest not, my friend," said Volktman; "it was for

the loss of thee that I looked sorrowful. I perceive that thou wilt take a journey soon, and that it will be of no pleasant nature."

"Indeed!" answered the Englishman, smilingly. "I ask leave to question the fact: you know better than any man, how often, through an error in our calculations, through haste, even through an over-attention, astrological predictions are exposed to falsification; and at present I foresee so little chance of my quitting Rome, that I prefer the earthly probabilities to the celestial."

"My schemes are just, and the Heavens wrote their decrees in their clearest language," answered the astrologer. "Thou art on the eve of quitting Rome."

"On what occasion?"

The astrologer hesitated—the young visiter pressed the question.

"The lord of the fourth house," said Volktman, reluctantly, "is located in the eleventh house. Thou knowest to whom the position portends disaster."

"My father!" said the Englishman, anxiously, and turning pale; "I think that position would relate to him."

"It doth," said the astrologer, slowly.

"Impossible! I heard from him to-day; he is well —let me see the figures."

The young man looked over the mystic hieroglyphics of the art, inscribed on a paper that was placed before the visionary, with deep and scrutinizing attention. Without bewildering the reader with those words and figures of weird sound and import which perplex the uninitiated and entangle the disciple of astrology, I shall merely observe that there was one point in which the judgment appeared to admit doubt as to the signification. The Englishman insisted on the doubt; and a very learned and edifying debate was carried on between pupil and master, in the heat of which all recollection of the point in dispute (as is usual in such cases) evaporated.

"I know not how it is," said the Englishman, "his

I should give any credence to a faith which (craving your forgiveness) most men out of Bedlam concur, at this day, in condemning as wholly idle and absurd. For it may be presumed, that men only incline to some unpopular theory in proportion as it flatters or favours them; and as for this theory of yours—of ours, if you will—it has foretold me nothing but misfortune."

"Thy horoscope," replied the astrologer, "is indeed singular and ominous; but, like my daughter, the exact minute (within almost a whole hour) of thy birth seems unknown; and however ingeniously we, following the ancients, have contrived means for correcting nativities, our predictions (so long as the exact period of birth is not ascertained) remain, in my mind, always liable to some uncertainty. Indeed, the surest method of reducing the supposed time to the true—that of 'accidents,' is but partially given, as in thy case; for, with a negligence that cannot be too severely blamed or too deeply lamented, thou hast omitted to mark down, or remember, the days on which accidents—fevers, broken limbs, &c.—occurred to thee; and this omission leaves a cloud over the bright chapters of fate—"

"Which," interrupted the young man, "is so much happier for me, in that it allows me some loophole for hope."

"Yet," renewed the astrologer, as if resolved to deny his friend any consolation, "thy character, and the bias of thy habits, as well as the peculiarities of thy person—nay, even the moles upon thy skin—accord with thy proposed horoscope."

"Be it so!" said the Englishman, gayly. "You grant me, at least, the fairest of earthly gifts—the happiness of pleasing that sex which alone sweetens our human misfortunes. That gift I would sooner have, even accompanied as it is, than all the benign influences without it."

"Yet," said the astrologer, "shalt thou even there be met with affliction; for Saturn had the power to thwart the star Venus, that was disposed to favour thee, and evil may be the result of the love thou inspi-

rest. There is one thing remarkable in our science, which is especially worthy of notice in thy lot. The ancients, unacquainted with the star Herschel, seem also scarcely acquainted with the character which the influence of that wayward and melancholy orb creates. Thus the aspect of Herschel neutralizes, in great measure, the boldness, and ambition, and pride of heart thou wouldst otherwise have drawn from the felicitous configuration of the stars around the Moon and Mercury at thy birth. That yearning for something beyond the narrow bounds of the world, that love for revery, that passionate romance, yea, thy very starry mysteries—all are bestowed on thee by this new and potential planet."

"And hence, I suppose," said the Englishman, interested (as the astrologer had declared) in spite of himself, "hence that opposition, in my nature, of the worldly and romantic; hence, with you, I am the dreaming enthusiast; but, the instant I regain the living and motley crowd, I shake off the influence with ease, and become the gay pursuer of social pleasures."

"Never *at heart gay*," muttered the astrologer; "Saturn and Herschel make not sincere mirth-makers." The Englishman did not hear, or seem to hear him.

"No," resumed the young man, musingly, "no! it is true that there is some counteraction of what, at times, I should have called my natural bent. Thus I am bold enough, and covetous of knowledge, and not deaf to vanity; and yet I have no ambition. The desire to rise seems to me wholly unalluring: I scorn and contemn it as a weakness. But what matters it? so much the happier for me if, as you predict, my life be short. But how, if so unambitious and so quiet of habit, how can I imagine that my death will be violent as well as premature?"

It was as he spoke that the young Lucilla, who, with fixed eyes and lips apart, had been drinking in their conversation, suddenly rose and left the room. They were used to her comings in and her goings out without cause or speech, and continued their conversation.

"Alas!" said the visionary, "can tranquillity of life, or care, or prudence, preserve us from our destiny? No sign is more deadly, whether by accident or murder, than that which couples Hyleg with Orion and Saturn. Yet thou mayst pass the year in which that danger is foretold thee; and, beyond that time, peace, honour, and good fortune await thee. Better to have the menace of ill in early life than in its decline. Youth bears up against misfortune; but it withers the heart, and crushes the soul of age!"

"After all," said the young guest, haughtily, "we must do our best to contradict the starry evils by our own internal philosophy. We can make ourselves independent of fate; that independence is better than prosperity!" Then, changing his tone, he added, "But you imagine that, by the power of other arts, we may control and counteract the prophecies of the stars—"

"How meanest thou?" said the astrologer, hastily. "Thou dost not suppose that alchymy, which is the servant of the heavenly host, is their opponent?"

"Nay," answered the disciple; "but you allow that we may be enabled to ward off evils and to cure diseases, otherwise fatal to us, by the gift of Uriel and the charm of the Cabala?"

"Surely," replied the visionary; "but then I opine that the discovery of these precious secrets was foretold to us by the Omniscient Book at our nativity; and, therefore, though the menace of evils be held out to us, so also is the probability of their correction or our escape. And I must own," pursued the enthusiast, "that to me, the very culture of those divine arts hath given a consolation amid the evils to which I have been fated; so true seems it, that it is not in the outer nature, in the great elements, and in the bowels of the earth, but also within ourself, that we must look for the preparations whereby we are to achieve the wisdom of Zoroaster and Hermes. We must abstract ourselves from passion and earthly desire. Lapped in a celestial revery, we must work out, by contemplation, the essence from the matter of things; nor can we dart into the soul of

the Mystic World until we ourselves have forgotten the body; and by fast, by purity, and by thought, have become, in the flesh itself, a living soul."

Much more, and with an equal wildness of metaphysical eloquence, did the astrologer declare in praise of those arts condemned by the old church; and it doth indeed appear, from reference to the numerous works of the alchymists and magians yet extant, somewhat hastily and unjustly. For those books all unite in dwelling on the necessity of virtue, subdued passions, and a clear mind, in order to become a fortunate and accomplished cabalist—a precept, by-the-way, not without its policy; for, if the disciple failed, the failure might be attributed to his own fleshly imperfections, not to any deficiency in the truth of the science.

The young man listened to the visionary with an earnest and fascinated attention. Independent of the dark interest always attached to discourses of supernatural things, more especially, we must allow, in the mouth of a fervent and rapt believer, there was that in the language and very person of the astrologer which inexpressibly enhanced the effect of the theme. Like most men conversant with the literature of a country, but not accustomed to daily conversation with its natives, the English words and fashion of periods that occurred to Volktman were rather those used in books than in colloquy; and a certain solemnity and slowness of tone, accompanied with the frequent, almost constant use of the pronoun singular—the *thou* and the *thee* (so common in other languages, so rare in ours), gave a strangeness and unfamiliar majesty to his dialect that suited well with the subjects on which he so loved to dwell. Himself was lean, gaunt, and wan; his cheeks were drawn and hollow; and thin locks, prematurely bleached to gray, fell in disorder round high, bare temples, in which the thought that is not of this world had paled the hue and furrowed the surface. But, as may be noted in many imaginative men, the life that seemed faint and chill in the rest of the frame

collected itself, as in a citadel, within the eye. Bright, wild, and deep, the expression of those blue large orbs told the intense enthusiasm of the mind within; and, even somewhat thrillingly, communicated a part of that emotion to those on whom they dwelt. No painter could have devised, nor even Volktman himself, in the fulness of his Northern phantasy, have sculptured forth a better image of those pale and unearthly students who, in the darker ages, applied life and learning to one unhallowed vigil, the Hermes or the Gebir of the alchymist's empty science—dreamers, and the martyrs of their dreams.

In the discussion of mysteries which would only weary, while they perplexed the reader to attempt to detail, the enthusiasts passed the greater portion of the night; and when at length the Englishman rose to depart, it cannot be denied that a solemn and boding emotion agitated his breast.

"We have talked," said he, attempting a smile, "of things above this nether life; and here we are lost, uncertain. On one thing, however, we can decide; life itself is encompassed with gloom; sorrow and anxiety await even those upon whom the stars shed their most golden influence. We know not one day what the next shall bring! no, I repeat it; no—in spite of your scheme, and your ephemeris, and your election of happy moments. But, come what will, Volktman, come all that you foretell to me—crosses in my love, disappointment in my life, melancholy in my blood, and a violent death in the very flush of my manhood—ME at least, ME! my soul, my heart, my better part, you shall never cast down, or darken, or deject. I move in a certain and serene circle; ambition cannot tempt me above it, nor misfortune cast me below!"

Volktman looked at the speaker with surprise and admiration; the enthusiasm of a brave mind is the only fire broader and brighter than that of a fanatical one.

"Alas! my young friend," he said, as he clasped

the hand of his guest; "I would to Heaven that my predictions may be wrong: often and often they have been erroneous," added he, bowing his head humbly; "they may be so in reference to thee. So young, so brilliant, so beautiful too; so brave, yet so romantic of heart, I feel for all that may happen to thee—ay, far, far more deeply than aught which may be fated to myself; for I am an old man now, and long inured to disappointment; all the greenness of my life is gone: even could I attain to the Grand Secret, the knowledge, methinks, would be too late. And, at my birth, my lot was portioned out unto me in characters so clear, that, while I have had time to acquiesce in it, I have had no doubt to subtilize it away: for Jupiter in Cancer, removed from the ascendant, and not impedited of any other star, betokened me, indeed, some expertness in science, but a life of seclusion, and one that should bring not forth the fruits that its labour deserved. But there is so much in thy fate that ought to be bright and glorious, that it will be no common destiny marred should the evil influences and the ominous seasons prevail against thee. But thou speakest boldly—boldly, and as one of a high soul, though it be sometimes clouded and led astray. And I therefore, again and again, impress upon thee, it is from *thine own self*, thine own character, thine own habits, that all evil save that of death will come. Wear, then, I implore thee, wear in thy memory, as a jewel, the first great maxim of alchymist and magian —'SEARCH THYSELF — CORRECT THYSELF — SUBDUE THYSELF;' it is only through the lamp of crystal that the light will shine duly out."

"It is more likely that the stars should err," returned the Englishman, "than that the human heart should correct itself of error: adieu!"

He left the room, and proceeded along a passage that led to the outer door. Ere he reached it another door opened suddenly, and the face of Lucilla broke forth upon him. She held a light in her hand; and, as she gazed on the Englishman, he saw that her face

was very pale, and that she had been weeping. She looked at him long and earnestly, and the look affected him strangely; he broke silence, which at first it appeared to him difficult to do.

"Good-night, my pretty friend," said he: "shall I bring you some flowers to-morrow?"

Lucilla burst into a wild eltrich laugh; and, abruptly closing the door, left him in darkness.

The cool air of the breaking dawn came freshly to the cheek of the Englishman, yet still an unpleasant and heavy sensation sat at his heart. His nerves, previously weakened by his long commune with the visionary, and the effect it had produced, yet tingled and thrilled with the abrupt laugh and meaning countenance of that strange girl, who differed so widely from all others of her years. The stars were growing pale and ghostly, and there was a mournful and dim haze around the moon.

"Ye look ominously upon me," said he, half aloud, as his eyes fixed their gaze above; and the excitement of his spirit spread to his language: "ye on whom, if our lore be faithful, the Most High hath written the letters of our mortal doom. And if ye rule the tides of the great deep and the changes of the rolling year, what is there out of reason or nature in our belief that ye hold the same sympathetic and unseen influence over the blood and heart, which are the character (and the character makes the conduct) of man?" Pursuing his soliloquy of thought, and finding reasons for a credulity that afforded to him but little cause for pleasure or hope, the Englishman took his way to St. Sebastian's gate.

There was, in truth, much in the traveller's character that corresponded with that which was attributed and destined to one to whom the heavens had given a horoscope answering to his own; and it was this conviction, rather than any accidental coincidence in events, which had first led him to pore with a deep attention over the vain but imposing prophecies of judicial astrology. Possessed of all the powers that

enable men to rise; ardent, yet ordinarily shrewd; eloquent, witty, brave; and, though not what may be termed versatile, possessing that rare art of concentrating the faculties which enables the possessor rapidly and thoroughly to master whatsoever once arrests the attention, he yet despised all that would have brought these endowments into full and legitimate display. He lived only for enjoyment. A passionate lover of women, music, letters, and the arts, it was society, not the world, which made the sphere and end of his existence. Yet was he no vulgar and commonplace epicurean: he lived for enjoyment; but that enjoyment was mainly formed from elements wearisome to more ordinary natures. Revery, contemplation, loneliness, were at times dearer to him than the soft and more Aristippean delights. His energies were called forth in society, but he was scarcely social. Trained from his early boyhood to solitude, he was seldom weary of being alone. He sought the crowd, not to amuse himself, but to observe others. The world to him was less as a theatre on which he was to play a part, than as a book in which he loved to decipher the enigmas of wisdom. He observed all that passed around him. No sprightly cavalier at any time, the charm that he exercised at will over his companions was that of softness, not vivacity. But, amid that silken blandness of demeanour, the lynx eye of Remark never slept. He penetrated character at a glance, but he seldom made use of his knowledge. He found a pleasure in reading men, but a fatigue in governing them. And thus, consummately skilled as he was in the *science du monde*, he often allowed himself to appear ignorant of its practice. Forming in his mind a *beau idéal* of friendship and of love, he never found enough in the realities long to engage his affection. Thus, with women he was considered fickle, and with men he had no intimate companionship. This trait of character is common with persons of genius; and, owing to too large an overflow of heart, they are frequently considered heartless.

There is always, however, danger that a character of this kind should become with years what it seems—what it soon learns to despise. Nothing steels the affections like contempt.

The next morning an express from England reached the young traveller. His father was dangerously ill; nor was it expected that the utmost diligence would enable the young man to receive his last blessing. The Englishman, appalled and terror-stricken, recalled his interview with the astrologer. Nothing so effectually dismays us as to feel a confirmation of some idea of supernatural dread that has already found entrance within our reason; and of all supernatural belief, that of being compelled by a predecree, and thus being the mere tools and puppets of a dark and relentless fate, seems the most fraught at once with abasement and with horror.

The Englishman left Rome that morning, and sent only a verbal and hasty message to the astrologer, announcing the cause of his departure. Volktman was a man of excellent heart: but one would scarcely like to inquire whether exultation at the triumph of his prediction was not with him a far more powerful sentiment than grief at the misfortune to his frend!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE YOUTH OF LUCILLA VOLKTMAN.—A MYSTERIOUS CONVERSATION.—THE RETURN OF ONE UNLOOKED FOR.

Time went slowly on, and Lucilla grew up in beauty. The stranger traits of her character increased in strength, but perhaps in the natural bashfulness of maidenhood they became more latent. At the age of fifteen, her elastic shape had grown round and full, and the wild girl had already ripened to the woman. An

expresion of thought, when the play of her features was in repose, that dwelt upon her lip and forehead, gave her the appearance of being two or three years older than she was: but again, when her natural vivacity returned—when the clear and buoyant music of her gay laugh rang out, or when the cool air and bright sky of morning sent the blood to her cheek and the zephyr to her step, her face became as the face of childhood, and contrasted with a singular and dangerous loveliness the rich development of her form.

And still was Lucilla Volktman a stranger to all that savoured of the world; the company of others of her sex and age never drew forth her emotions from their resting-place:

"And Nature said, a lovelier flower
On earth was never sown:

* * * * * *

Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse; and with me
The girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place;
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty, born of murmuring sound,
Shall pass into her face."—WORDSWORTH.

These lines have occurred to me again and again as I looked on the face of her to whom I have applied them. And remembering, as I do, its radiance and glory in her happier moments, I can scarcely persuade myself to notice the faults and heats of temper which at times dashed away all its lustre and gladness. Unrestrained and fervid, she gave way to the irritation or grief of the moment with a violence that would have terrified any one who beheld her at such times. But it rarely happened that the scene had its witness even in her father, for she fled to the loneliest spot she could find to indulge these emotions; and perhaps even the agony they occasioned—an agony convulsing the heart and whole of

her impassioned frame—took a sort of luxury from the solitary and unchecked nature of its indulgence.

Volktman continued his pursuits with an ardour that increased—as do all species of monomania—with increasing years; and in the accidental truth of some of his predictions, he forgot the erroneous result of the rest. He corresponded at times with the Englishman, who, after a short sojourn in England, had returned to the Continent, and was now making a prolonged tour through its northern capitals.

Very different, indeed, from the astrologer's occupations were those of the wanderer; and time, dissipation, and a maturer intellect had cured the latter of his boyish tendency to studies so idle and so vain. Yet he always looked back with an undefined and unconquered interest to the period of his acquaintance with the astrologer; to their long and thrilling watches in the night season; to the contagious fervour of faith breathing from the visionary; his dark and restless excursions into that remote science associated with the legends of eldest time, and of

> "The crew, who, under names of old renown,
> Osiris, Isis, Orus, and their train,
> With monstrous shapes and sorceries, abused
> Fanatic Egypt and her priests."

One night, four years after the last scene we have described in the astrologer's house, Volktman was sitting alone in his favourite room. Before him was a calculation on which the ink was scarcely dry. His face leaned on his breast, and he seemed buried in thought. His health had been, of late, gradually declining; and it might be seen upon his worn brow and attenuated frame, that death was already preparing to withdraw the visionary from a world whose substantial enjoyments he had so sparingly tasted.

Lucilla had been banished from his chamber during the day. She now knew that his occupation was over, and entered the room with his evening repast; that frugal meal, common with the Italians—the *polenta* (made of Indian corn), the bread and the fruits, which,

after the fashion of students, he devoured unconsciously, and would not have remembered one hour after whether or not it had been tasted!

"Sit thee down, child," said he to Lucilla, kindly; "sit thee down."

Lucilla obeyed, and took her seat upon the very stool on which she had been seated the last night on which the Englishman had seen her.

"I have been thinking," said Volktman, as he placed his hand on his daughter's head, "that I shall soon leave thee; and I should like to see thee protected by another before my own departure."

"Ah, father," said Lucilla, as the tears rushed to her eyes, "do not talk thus! indeed, indeed, you must not indulge in this perpetual gloom and seclusion of life. You promised to take me with you, some day this week, to the Vatican. Do let it be to-morrow: the weather has been so fine lately; and who knows how long it may last?"

"True," said Volktman; "and to-morrow will not, I think, be unfavourable to our stirring abroad, for the moon will be of the same age as at my birth—an accident that thou wilt note, my child, to be especially auspicious towards any enterprise."

The poor astrologer so rarely stirred from his home, that he did well to consider a walk of a mile or two in the light of an enterprise. "I have wished," continued he, after a pause, "that I might see our English friend once more—that is, ere long. For, to tell thee the truth, Lucilla, certain events happening unto him do, strangely enough, occur about the same time as that in which events, equally boding, will fall to thee. This coincidence it was which contributed to make me assume so warm an interest in the lot of a stranger. I would I might see him soon."

Lucilla's beautiful breast heaved, and her face was covered with blushes: these were symptoms of a disorder that never occurred to the recluse.

"Thou rememberest the foreigner?" asked Volktman, after a pause.

"Yes," said Lucilla, half inaudibly.

"I have not heard from him of late: I will make question concerning him ere the cock crow."

"Nay, my father!" said Lucilla, quickly: "not to-night: you want rest; your eyes are heavy."

"Girl," said the mystic, "the soul sleepeth not, nor wanteth sleep: even as the stars, of which (as the Arabian saith) there is also a soul, with the which an intent passion of our own doth make an union—so that we, by an unslumbering diligence, do constitute ourselves a part of the heaven itself!—even, I say, as the stars may vanish from the human eye, nor be seen in the common day, though all the while their course is stopped not, nor their voices dumb—even so doth the soul of man retire, as it were, in a seeming sleep and torpor; yet it worketh all the same, and perhaps with a less impeded power, in that it is more free from common obstruction and trivial hinderance. And if I purpose to confer this night with the '*Intelligence*' that ruleth earth and earth's beings concerning this stranger, it will not be by the vigil and the scheme, but by the very sleep which thou imaginest, in thy mental darkness, would deprive me of the resources of my art."

"Can you really, then, my father," said Lucilla, in a tone half anxious, half timid, "can you really, at will, conjure up in your dreams the persons you wish to see; or draw from sleep any oracle concerning their present state?"

"Of a surety," answered the astrologer; "it is one of the great, though not, perchance, the most gifted, of our endowments."

"Can you teach me the method?" asked Lucilla, gravely.

"All that relates to the art I can," rejoined the mystic: "but the chief and main power rests with thyself. For know, my daughter, that one who seeks the wisdom that is above the earth, must cultivate and excite, with long labour and deep thought, his least earthly faculty."

Here the visionary, observing that the countenance of Lucilla was stamped with a fixed attention, which she did not often bestow upon his metaphysical exordiums, paused for a moment, and then pursued the theme with the tone of one desirous of making himself at once as clear and impressive as the nature of an abstruse science would allow.

"There are two things in the outer creation, which, according to the great Hermes, suffice for the operation of all that is wonderful and glorious—Fire and Earth. Even so, my child, there are in the human mind two powers that effect all of which our nature is capable —REASON and IMAGINATION. Now mankind, less wise in themselves than in the outer world, have cultivated, for the most part, but one of these faculties; and that the inferior and more passive, REASON. They have tilled the *earth* of the human heart, but suffered its *fire* to remain dormant, or waste itself in chance and frivolous directions. Hence the insufficiency of human knowledge. Inventions founded only on reason move within a circle from which their escape is momentary and trivial. When some few, endowed with a juster instinct, have had recourse to the diviner element, IMAGINATION, thou wilt observe that they have used it only in the service of the lighter arts, and those chiefly disconnected from REASON. Such is poetry, and music, and other delicious fabrications of genius, that amuse men, soften men, but *advance* them not. They have, with but rare exceptions, left this glorious and winged faculty utterly passive in the service of philosophy. There REASON alone has been admitted, and IMAGINATION hath been carefully banished, as an erratic and deceitful meteor. Now mark me, child: I, noting this our error in early youth, did résolve to see what might be effected by the culture of this renounced and maltreated element; and finding, as I proceeded in the studies that grew from this desire, by the occult yet guiding writings of the great philosophers of old, that they had forestalled me in this discovery, I resolved to learn, from their experience, by

what means the imagination is best fostered, and, as it were, sublimed.

"Anxiously following their precepts—the truth of which soon appeared—I found that solitude, fast, intense revery upon the one theme on which we desired knowledge, were the true elements and purifiers of this glorious faculty. It was by these means and by this power that men so far behind us in lesser lore, achieved, on the mooned plains of Chaldea and by the dark waters of Egypt, their penetration into the womb of Event: by these means and this power the solitaries of the Gothic time not only attained to the most riddled arcana of the stars, but to the empire of the spirits about, above, and beneath the earth: a power, indeed, disputed by the presumptuous sophists of the present time, but of which their writings yet contain ample proof. Nay, by the constant feeding, and impressing, and moulding, and refining, and heightening the imaginative power, I do conceive that even the false prophets and the evil practitioners of the blacker cabala clomb unto the power seemingly inconceivable—the power of accomplishing miracles and prodigies, that to appearance belie, but in truth verify, the course of nature. By this spirit within the flesh we grow *from* the flesh, and may see, and at length invoke, the souls of the dead, and receive warnings, and hear omens, and girdle our sleep with dreams.

"Not unto me," continued the cabalist, in a lowlier tone, "have been vouchsafed all these gifts; for I began the art when the first fire of youth was dim within me; and it was therefore with duller and already earth-clogged pinions that I sought to rise. Something, however, I have won as a recompense for austere abstinence and much labour; and this power over the land of dreams is at least within my command."

"Then," said Lucilla, in a disappointed tone, "it is only by a long course of indulgence to the fervour of the imagination, and not by spell or charm, that one can gain a similar power?"

"Not wholly so, my daughter," replied the mystic;

"they who do so excite, and have so raised the diviner faculty, can alone possess the *certain and invariable* power over dreams, even without charms and talismans: but the most dull or idle may hope to do so with just confidence (though not certainty) by help of skill, and by directing the full force of their half-roused fancy towards the person or object they wish to see reflected in the glass of Sleep."

"And what means should the uninitiated employ?" asked Lucilla, in a tone betokening her interest.

"I will tell thee," answered the astrologer. "Thou must inscribe on a white parchment an image of the sun."

"As how?" interrupted Lucilla.

"Thus!" said the astrologer, drawing from among his papers one inscribed with the figure of a man asleep on the bosom of an angel. "This was made at the potential and appointed time, when the sun was in the Ninth of the Celestial Houses, and the Lion shook his bright mane as he ascended the blue mount. Observe, that on the figure must be written thy desire —the name of the person thou wishest to see, or the thing thou wouldst have foreshown: then, having prepared and brought the mind to a faith in the effect —for, without faith, the imagination lies inert and lifeless—this image will be placed under the head of the invoker, and when the moon goeth through the sign which was in the Ninth House of his nativity, the Dream will glide into him, and his soul walk with the spirit of the vision."

"Give me the image," said Lucilla, eagerly.

The mystic hesitated. "No, Lucilla," said he, at length; "no, it is a dark and comfortless path, that of prescience and unearthly knowledge, save to the few that walk it with a gifted light and a fearless soul. It is not for women or children—nay, for few among men: it withers up the sap of life, and makes the hair gray before its time. No, no; take the broad sunshine, and the brief but sweet flowers of earth; they are better for thee, my child, and for thy years, than the

fever and hope of the night-dream and the planetary influence."

So saying, the astrologer replaced the image within the leaves of one of his books; and, with a prudence not common to him, thrust the volume into a drawer, which he locked. The fair face of Lucilla became clouded, but the ill health of her father imposed a restraint on her wild temper.

Just at that moment the door slowly opened, and the Englishman stood before the daughter and sire. They did not note him at first. The solitary servant of the sage had admitted him; he had proceeded, without ceremony, to the well-remembered apartment.

As he now stood gazing on the pair, he observed with an inward smile how exactly their present attitudes (as well as the whole aspect of the scene) resembled those in which he had broken upon them on the last evening he had visited that chamber; the father bending over the old, worn, quaint table; and the daughter seated beside him on the same low stool. The character of their countenances struck him, too, as wearing the same ominous expression as when those countenances had chilled him on that evening. For Volktman's features were impressed with the sadness that breathed from, and caused, his prohibition to his daughter; and that prohibition had given to her features an abstraction and shadow similar to the dejection they had worn on the night we recur to.

This remembered coincidence did not cheer the spirits of the young traveller; he muttered to himself; and then, as if anxious to break the silence, moved forward with a heavy step.

Volktman started at the sound; and, looking up, seemed literally electrified by this sudden apparition of one whom he had so lately expressed his desire to see. His lips muttered the intruder's name, one well known to the reader (it was the name of Godolphin), and then closed: but Lucilla sprang from her seat, and, clasping her hands joyously together, darted forward till she came within a foot of the unexpected

visiter. There she abruptly arrested herself, blushed deeply, and stood before him humbled, agitated, but all vivid with delight.

"What, is this Lucilla?" said Godolphin, admiringly: "how beautiful she is grown!" and, advancing, he saluted, with a light and fraternal kiss, her girlish and damask cheek: then, without heeding her confusion, he turned to the astrologer, who by this time had a little recovered from his amaze.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE EFFECT OF YEARS AND EXPERIENCE.—THE ITALIAN CHARACTER.

Godolphin now came almost daily to the astrologer's abode. He was shocked to perceive the physical alteration four years had wrought in his singular friend; and, with the warmth of a heart naturally kind, he sought to contribute to the comfort and enjoyment of a life that was evidently drawing to a close.

Godolphin's company seemed to give Volktman a pleasure which nothing else could afford him. He loved to converse on the various incidents that had occurred since they met; and, in whatsoever Godolphin communicated to him, the mystic sought to impress upon his friend's attention the fulfilment of an astrological prediction.

Godolphin, though no longer impressed with a belief in the visionary's science, did not affect to combat his assertions. He had not, in his progress through life, found much to shake his habitual indolence in ordinary affairs; and it was no easy matter to provoke one of his quiet temper and self-indulging wisdom into conversational dispute. Besides, who argues with fanaticism?

Since the young Idealist had left England, the elements of his character had been slowly performing the ordination of time, and working their due change in its general aspect. The warm fountains of youth flowed not so freely as before: the selfishness that always comes, sooner or later, to solitary men of the world, had gradually mingled itself with all the channels of his heart. The brooding and thoughtful disposition of his faculties having turned from romance to what he deemed philosophy, that which once was enthusiasm had hardened into wisdom. He neither hated men, nor loved them with a sanguine philanthropy; he viewed them with cool and discerning eyes. He did not think it within the power of governments to make the mass, in any country, much happier or more elevated than they are. Republics, he was wont to say, favoured *aristocratic* virtues, and despotisms extinguished them: but whether in a monarchy or republic, the hewers of wood and the drawers of water, *the multitude*, still remained intrinsically the same.

This theory heightened his indifference to ambition. The watchwords of party appeared to him ridiculous; and politics in general—what a great moralist termed one question in particular—a shuttlecock kept up by the contention of noisy children. His mind thus rested, as to all public matters, in a state of quietude, and covered over with the mantle of a most false, a most perilous philosophy. His appetites to pleasure had grown somewhat dulled by experience, but he was, as yet, neither sated nor discontented. One feeling at his breast still remained scarcely diminished of its effect when the string was touched—his tender remembrance of Constance; and this had prevented any subsequent but momentary attachment deepening into love. Thus, at the age of six-and-twenty, Percy Godolphin reappears on our stage.

There was a great deal in the Italian character that our traveller liked: its love of ease, reduced into a system; its courtesy; its content with the world as it

is; its moral apathy as regards all that agitates life, save one passion; and the universal tenderness, ardour, and delicacy which, in *that* passion, it ennobles itself in displaying. The commonest peasant of Rome or Naples, though not, perhaps, in the freer land of Tuscany, can comprehend all the romance and mystery of the most subtle species of love; all that it requires in England, the idle habits of aristocracy, and the sensitive fibre of genius even to conceive. And what is yet stranger, the worn-out debauchee, sage with an experience and variety of licentiousness, which come not within the compass of a Northern profligacy, remains alive to the earliest and most innocent sentiments of the passion. And if Platonism in its coldest purity exist on earth, it is among the Aretins of Southern Italy.

This unworldly refinement, amid so much worldly callousness, was a peculiarity that afforded perpetual amusement to the nice eye and subtle judgment of Godolphin. He loved not to note the common elements of character: whatever was most abstract and difficult to analyze pleased him most. He mixed, then, much with the Romans, and was a favourite among them; but, during his present visit to the Immortal City, he did not, how distantly soever, associate with the English. His carelessness of show, and the independence of a single man from burdensome connexions, rendered his income fully competent to his wants; but, like many proud men, he was not willing to make it seem, even to himself, as a comparative poverty beside the lavish expenses of his ostentatious countrymen. Travel, moreover, had augmented those stores of reflection which rob solitude of *ennui*.

CHAPTER XXX.

MAGNETISM.—SYMPATHY.—THE RETURN OF ELEMENTS TO ELEMENTS.

DAILY did the health of Volktman decline; Lucilla was the only one ignorant of his danger. She had never seen the gradual approaches of death: her mother's abrupt and rapid illness made the whole of her experience of disease. Physicians and dark rooms were necessarily coupled in her mind with disease; and as the astrologer, rapt in his calculations, altered not any of his habits, and was insensible to pain, she fondly attributed his occasional complaints to the melancholy induced by seclusion. With sedentary men, diseases being often those connected with the organization of the heart, do not unusually terminate suddenly: it was so with Volktman.

One day he was alone with Godolphin, and their conversation turned upon one of the doctrines of the old Magnetism; a doctrine which, depending as it does so much upon a seeming reference to experience, survived the rest of its associates, and is still not wholly out of repute among the wild imaginations of Germany.

"One of the most remarkable and abstruse points in what students call metaphysics," said Volktman, "is *sympathy;* the first principle, according to some, of all human virtue. It is this, say they, which makes men just, humane, charitable. When one who has never heard of the duty of assisting his neighbour sees another drowning, he plunges into the water and saves him. Why? because involuntarily, and at once, his imagination places himself in the situation of the stranger: the pain *he* would experience in the watery death glances across him: from this pain he hastens, without analyzing its cause, to deliver himself.

"Humanity is thus taught him by sympathy: where

is this sympathy placed? in the nerves: the nerves are the communicants with outward nature; the more delicate the nerves, the finer the sympathies; hence women and children are more alive to sympathy than men. Well, mark me: do not these nerves have attraction and sympathy, not only with human suffering, but with the powers of what is falsely termed inanimate nature? Do not the winds, the influences of the weather and the seasons, act confessedly upon them? and if one part of nature, why not another, inseparably connected too with that part? If the weather and seasons have sympathy with the nerves, why not the moon and the stars, by which the weather and the seasons are influenced and changed? Ye of the schools may allow that sympathy originates some of our actions; I say it governs the whole world, the whole creation! Before the child is born, it is this secret affinity which can mark and stamp him with the witness of his mother's terror or his mother's desire."

"Yet," said Godolphin, "you would scarcely, in your zeal for sympathy, advocate the same cause as Edricius Mohynnus, who cured wounds by a powder, not applied to the wound, but to the towel that had been dipped in its blood?"

"No," answered Volktman: "it is these quacks and pretenders that have wronged all sciences by clamouring for false deductions. But I do believe of sympathy that it has a power to transport ourselves out of the body and reunite us with the absent. Hence trances and raptures, in which the patient, being sincere, will tell thee, in grave earnestness and with minute detail, of all that he saw, and heard, and encountered afar off, in other parts of the earth, or even above the earth. As thou knowest the accredited story of the youth who, being transported with a vehement and long-nursed desire to see his mother, did, through that same desire, become, as it were, rapt, and beheld her, being at the distance of many miles, and giving and exchanging signs of their real and bodily conference."

Godolphin turned aside to conceal an involuntary smile at this grave affirmation; but the mystic, perhaps perceiving it, continued yet more eagerly:

"Nay, I myself, at times, have experienced such trance, if trance it be; and have conversed with them who have passed from the outward earth—with my father and my wife. And," continued he, after a moment's pause, "I do believe that we may, by means of this power of attraction—this elementary and all-penetrative sympathy—pass away, in our last moments, at once into the bosom of those we love. For, by the intent and rapt longing to behold the Blessed and to be among them, we may be drawn insensibly into their presence; and the hour being come when the affinity between the spirit and the body shall be dissolved, the mind and desire, being so drawn upward, can return to earth no more. And this sympathy, refined and extended, will make, I imagine, our powers, our very being, in a future state. Our sympathy being only, then, with what is immortal, we shall partake necessarily of that nature which attracts us; and the body no longer clogging the intenseness of our desires, we shall be able, by a wish, to transport ourselves wheresoever we please; from star to star, from glory to glory, charioted and winged by our wishes."

Godolphin did not reply, for he was struck with the growing paleness of the mystic, and with a dreaming and intent fixedness that seemed creeping over his eyes, which were usually bright and restless. The day was now fast declining. Lucilla entered the room, and came caressingly to her father's side.

"Is the evening warm, my child?" said the astrologer.

"Very mild and warm," answered Lucilla.

"Give me your arm, then," said he; "I will sit a little while without the threshold."

The Romans live in flats, as at Edinburgh, and with a common stair. Volktman's abode was in the *secondo piano*. He descended the stairs with a step lighter than it had been of late; and, sinking into a seat with-

out the house, seemed silently and gratefully to inhale the soft and purple air of an Italian sunset.

By-and-by the sun had entirely vanished: and that most brief but most delicious twilight common to the clime had succeeded. Veil-like and soft, the mist that floats at that hour between earth and heaven lent its transparent shadow to the scene around them: it seemed to tremble as for a moment, and then was gone. The moon arose, and cast its light over Volktman's earnest countenance; over the rich bloom and watchful eye of Lucilla; over the contemplative brow and motionless figure of Godolphin. It was a group of indefinable interest: the earth was so still, that the visionary might well have fancied it had hushed itself, to drink within its quiet heart the voices of that Heaven in whose oracles he believed. Not one of the group spoke; the astrologer's mind and gaze were riveted above; and neither of his companions wished to break the meditations of the old and dreaming man.

Godolphin, with folded arms and downcast eyes, was pursuing his own thoughts; and Lucilla, to whom Godolphin's presence was a subtle and subduing intoxication, looked indeed upward to the soft and tender heavens, but with the soul of the loving daughter of earth.

Slowly, nor marked by his companions, the gaze of the mystic deepened and deepened in its fixedness.

The minutes went on, and the evening waned, till a chill breeze, floating down from the Latian hills, recalled Lucilla's attention to her father. She placed her own mantle tenderly on his shoulder, and whispered gently in his ear her admonition to shun the coldness of the coming night. He did not answer; and, on raising her voice a little higher, with the same result, she looked appealingly to Godolphin. He laid his hand on Volktman's shoulder; and, bending forward to address him, was struck dumb by the glazed and fixed expression of the mystic's eyes. The certainty flashed across him; he hastily felt Volktman's pulse—it was still. There was no doubt left on his mind; and yet the daughter, looking at him all the

while, did not even dream of this sudden and awful stroke. In silence, and unconsciously, the strange and solitary spirit of the mystic had passed from its home —in what exact instant of time, or by what last contest of nature, was not known.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A SCENE.—LUCILLA'S STRANGE CONDUCT.—GODOLPHIN PASSES THROUGH A SEVERE ORDEAL. — EGERIA'S GROTTO, AND WHAT THERE HAPPENS.

Let us pass over Godolphin's most painful task. What Lucilla's feelings were the reader may imagine; and yet her wayward and unanalyzed temper mocked at once imagination and expression to depict its sufferings or its joys.

The brother of Volktman's wife was sent for: he and his wife took possession of the abode of death. This, if possible, heightened Lucilla's anguish. The apathetic and vain character of the middle classes in Rome, which her relations shared, stung her heart by contrasting its own desolate abandonment to grief. Above all, she was revolted by the unnatural ceremonies of a Roman funeral. The corpse exposed—the cheeks painted—the parading procession, all shocked the delicacy of her real and reckless affliction. But, when this was over—when the rite of death was done —and when, in the house wherein her sire had presided, and she herself had been left to a liberty wholly unrestricted, she saw strangers (for such, comparatively, her relatives were to her) settling themselves down, with vacant countenances and light words, to the common occupations of life—when she saw them move, alter (nay, talk calmly, and sometimes with jests, of selling) those little household articles of furniture

which, homely and worn as they were, she had long considered sacred by a thousand dear, and infantine, and filial recollections—when, too, she found herself treated as a child, and in some measure as a dependant—when she, the wild, the free, saw herself subjected to restraint—nay, heard the commonest actions of her life chidden and reproved—when she saw the trite and mean natures which thus presumed to lord it over her, and assume empire in the house of one, of whose wild and lofty, though erring speculations—of whose generous though abstract elements of character, she could comprehend enough to respect, while what she did *not* comprehend heightened the respect into awe—then the more vehement and indignant passions of her mind broke forth! her flashing eye, her scornful gesture, her mysterious threat, and her open defiance, astonished always, sometimes amused, but more often terrified, the apathetic and superstitious Italians.

Godolphin, moved by interest and pity for the daughter of his friend, called once or twice after the funeral at the house; and commended, with promises and gifts, the desolate girl to the tenderness and commiseration of her relations. There is nothing an Italian will not promise, nothing he will not sell; and Godolphin thus purchased, in reality, a forbearance to Lucilla's strange temper (as it was considered), which otherwise, assuredly, would not have been displayed.

More than a month had elapsed since the astrologer's decease; and the season of the *malaria* verging to its commencement, Godolphin meditated a removal to Naples. He strolled, two days prior to his departure, to the house on the Appia Via, in order to take leave of Lucilla, and bequeath to her relations his parting injunctions.

It was a strange and harsh face that peered forth on him through the iron grating of the door before he obtained admittance; and when he entered, he heard the sound of voices in loud altercation. Among the rest, the naturally dulcet and silver tones of Lucilla were strained beyond their wonted key, and breathed the accents of passion and disdain.

He entered the room whence the sounds of dispute proceeded, and the first face that presented itself to him was that of Lucilla. It was flushed with anger; the veins in the smooth forehead were swelled; the short lip breathed beautiful contempt. She stood at some little distance from the rest of the inmates of the room, who were seated; and her posture was erect and even stately, though in wrath: her arms were folded upon her bosom, and the composed excitement of her figure contrasted with the play, and fire, and energy of her features.

At Godolphin's appearance a sudden silence fell upon the conclave; the uncle and the aunt (the latter of whom had seemed the noisiest) subsided into apologetic respect to the rich (he was rich to them) young Englishman; and Lucilla sank into a seat, covered her face with her small and beautiful hands, and—humbled from her anger and her vehemence—burst into tears.

"And what is this?" said Godolphin, pityingly.

The Italians hastened to inform him. Lucilla had chosen to absent herself from home every evening: she had been seen the last night on the Corso, crowded as that street was with the young, the profligate, and the idle. They could not but reprove "the dear girl" for this indiscretion (Italians, indifferent as to the conduct of the married, are generally attentive to that of their single women), and she announced her resolution to persevere in it.

"Is this true, my pupil?" said Godolphin, turning to Lucilla: the poor girl sobbed on, but returned no answer.

"Leave me to reprimand and admonish her," said he to the aunt and uncle; and they, without appearing to notice the incongruity of reprimand in the mouth of a man of six-and-twenty to a girl of fifteen, chattered forth a Babel of conciliation, and left the apartment.

Godolphin, young as he might be, was not unfitted for his task. There was a great deal of quiet dignity mingled with the kindness of his manner; and his af-

fection for Lucilla had hitherto been so pure, that he felt no embarrassment in addressing her as a brother. He approached the corner of the room in which she sat; he drew a chair near to her; and took her reluctant and trembling hand with a gentleness that made her weep with a yet warmer vehemence.

"My dear Lucilla," said he, "you know your father honoured me with his regard: let me presume on that regard, and on my long acquaintance with yourself, to address you as your friend—as your brother!" Lucilla drew away her hand; but again, as if ashamed of the impulse, extended it towards him.

"You cannot know the world as I do, dear Lucilla," continued Godolphin; "for experience in its affairs is bought at some little expense, which I pray that it may never cost you. In all countries, Lucilla, an unmarried female is exposed to dangers which, without any actual fault of her own, may imbitter her future life. One of the greatest of these dangers lies in deviating from custom. With the woman who does this, every man thinks himself entitled to give his thoughts—his words—nay, even his actions, a license which you cannot but dread to incur. Your uncle and aunt, therefore, do right to advise your not going alone, to the public streets of Rome more especially, except in the broad daylight; and though their advice be irksomely intruded and ungracefully couched, it is good in its principle, and —yes, dearest Lucilla, even *necessary* for you to follow."

"But," said Lucilla, through her tears, "you cannot guess what insults, what unkindness I have been forced to submit to from them. I, who never knew, till now, what insult and unkindness were! I, who—" here sobs checked her utterance.

"But how, my young and fair friend, how can you mend their manners by destroying their esteem for you? Respect yourself, Lucilla, if you wish others to respect you. But, perhaps"—and such a thought for the first time flashed across Godolphin—"perhaps you did not seek the Corso for the *crowd*, but for *one:*

perhaps you went there to meet—dare I guess the fact? —an admirer, a lover."

"Now *you* insult me!" cried Lucilla, angrily.

"I thank you for your anger; I accept it as a contradiction," said Godolphin. "But listen yet a while, and forgive frankness. If there be any one among the throng of Italian youths whom you have seen and could be happy with—one who loves you, and whom you do not hate, remember that I am your father's friend; that I am rich; that I can—"

"Cruel, cruel!" interrupted Lucilla; and, withdrawing herself from Godolphin, she walked to and fro with great and struggling agitation.

"Is it not so, then?" said Godolphin, doubtingly.

"No, sir: no!"

"Lucilla Volktman," said Godolphin, with a colder gravity than he had yet called forth, "I claim some attention from you—some confidence—nay, some esteem; for the sake of your father—for the sake of your early years, when I assisted to teach you my native tongue, and loved you as a brother. Promise me that you will not commit this indiscretion any more—at least till we meet again; nay, that you will not stir abroad, save with one of your relations."

"Impossible! impossible," cried Lucilla, vehemently; "it were to take away the only solace I have: it were to make life a privation—a curse."

"Not so, Lucilla; it is to make life respectable and safe. I, on the other hand, will engage that all within these walls shall behave to you with indulgence and kindness."

"I care not for their kindness—for the kindness of any one, save—"

"Whom?" asked Godolphin, perceiving she would not proceed: but, as she was silent, he did not press the question. "Come!" said he, persuasively: "come, promise, and be friends with me; do not let us part angrily: I am about to take my leave of you for many months."

"Part!—you!—months! Oh God, do not say so!"

With these words she was by his side, and gazing on him with her large and pleading eyes, wherein was stamped a wildness, a terror, the cause of which he did not as yet decipher.

"No, no," said she, with a faint smile; "no! you meant to frighten me, to extort my promise. *You* are not going to desert me!"

"But, Lucilla, I will not leave you to unkindness; they shall not, they durst not wound you again."

"Say to me that you are not going from Rome: speak—quick!"

I go in two days."

"Then let me die!" said Lucilla, in a tone of such deep despair that it chilled and appalled Godolphin, who did not, however, attribute her grief (the grief of this mere child—a child so wayward and eccentric) to any other cause than that feeling of abandonment which the young so bitterly experience at being left utterly alone with persons unfamiliar to their habits and opposed to their liking.

He sought to sooth her, but she repelled him. Her features worked convulsively: she walked twice across the room, then stopped opposite to him, and a certain strained composure on her brow seemed to denote that she had arrived at some sudden resolution.

"Wouldst thou ask me," she said, "what cause took me into the streets as the shadows darkened, and enabled me lightly to bear threats at home and risk abroad?"

"Ay, Lucilla: will you tell me?"

"THOU wast the cause!" she said, in a low voice, trembling with emotion, and the next moment sunk on her knees before him.

With a confusion that ill became so practised and favoured a gallant, Godolphin sought to raise her. "No! no!" she said, "you will despise me now: let me lie here, and die thinking of thee. Yes!" she continued, with an inward but rapid voice, as he lifted her reluctant frame from the earth, and hung over her with a cold and uncaressing attention: "yes! you

I loved—I adored—from my very childhood. When you were by, life seemed changed to me; when absent, I longed for night, that I might dream of you. The spot you had touched I marked out in silence, that I might kiss it and address it when you were gone. You left us—four years passed away—and the recollection of you made and shaped my very nature. I loved solitude, for in solitude I saw you—in imagination I spoke to you—and methought you answered, and did not chide. You returned—and—and—but no matter: to see you, at the hour you usually leave home—*to see you*, I wandered forth with the evening. I tracked you, myself unseen; I followed you at a distance; I marked you disappear within some of the proud palaces that never know what love is. I returned home weeping, but happy. And do you think—do you dare to think—that I should have told you this had you not driven me mad?—had you not left me reckless of what henceforth was thought of me—became of me? What will life be to me when you are gone? And now I have said all! Go! You do not love me—I know it—but do not say so. Go—leave me! Why do you not leave me?"

Does there live one man who can hear a woman, young and beautiful, confess attachment to him, and not catch the contagion? Affected, flattered, and almost melted into love himself, Godolphin felt all the danger of the moment: but this young, inexperienced girl—the daughter of his friend—no! her he could not—loving, willing as she was—betray.

Yet it was some moments before he could command himself sufficiently to answer her: "Listen to me calmly," at length he said; "we are at least to each other dear friends—nay, listen, I beseech you. I, Lucilla, am a man whose heart is forestalled—exhausted before its time; I have loved, deeply and passionately: that love is over, but it has unfitted me for any species of love resembling itself—any which I could offer to you. Dearest Lucilla, I will not disguise the truth from you. Were I to love you, it would be—not in

the eyes of *your* countrymen (with whom such connexions are common), but in the eyes of mine—it would be dishonour. Shall I confer even this partial dishonour on you? No! Lucilla, this feeling of yours towards me is (pardon me) but a young and childish phantasy: you will smile at it some years hence. I am not worthy of so pure and fresh a heart: but at least"—here he spoke in a lower voice, and as to himself—"at least I am not so unworthy as to wrong it."

"Go!" said Lucilla; "go, I implore you." She spoke, and stood hueless and motionless, as if the life (life's life was indeed gone!) had departed from her. Her features were set and rigid; the tears that stole in large drops down her cheeks were unfelt; a slight quivering of her lips only bespoke what passed within her.

"Ah!" cried Godolphin, stung from his usual calm—stung from the quiet kindness he had sought from principle to assume—"can I withstand this trial? I, whose dream of life has been the love that I might now find! I, who have never before known an obstacle to a wish which I have not contended against, if not conquered; and, weakened as I am with the habitual indulgence to temptation, which has never been so strong as now—but no! I will—I will deserve this attachment by self-restraint—self-sacrifice."

He moved away; and then returning, dropped on his knee before Lucilla.

"Spare me!" said he, in an agitated voice, that brought back all the blood to that young and transparent cheek, which was now half averted from him; "spare me, spare yourself! Look around, when I am gone, for some one to replace my image: thousands younger, fairer, warmer of heart, will aspire to your love; that love for them will be exposed to no peril, no shame: forget me; select another; be happy and respected. Permit me alone to fill the place of your friend, your brother. I will provide for your comforts, your liberty: you shall be restrained, offended no more.

God bless you, dear, dear Lucilla; and believe" (he said, almost in a whisper) "that, in thus flying you, I have acted generously, and with an effort worthy of your loveliness and your love."

He said, and hurried from the apartment. Lucilla turned slowly round as the door closed, and then fell motionless on the ground.

Meanwhile Godolphin, mastering his emotion, sought the host and hostess; and begging them to visit his lodging that evening to receive certain directions and rewards, hastily left the house.

But, instead of returning home, the desire for a brief solitude and self-commune, that usually follows strong excitement (and which, in all less ordinary events, suggested his sole counsellors or monitors to the musing Godolphin), led his steps in an opposite direction. Scarce conscious whither he was wandering, he did not pause till he found himself in that green and still valley in which the pilgrim beholds the grotto of Egeria.

It was noon, and the day warm, but not overpowering. The leaf slept on the old trees that are scattered about that little valley; and amid the soft and rich turf the wanderer's step disturbed the lizard, basking its brilliant hues in the noontide, and glancing rapidly through the herbage as it retreated. And from the trees and through the air, the occasional song of the birds (for in Italy their voices are rare) floated with a peculiar clearness, and even noisiness of music, along the deserted haunts of the Nymph.

The scene, rife with its beautiful associations, recalled Godolphin from his revery. "And here," thought he, "Fable has thrown its most lovely and enduring enchantment: here, every one who has tasted the loves of earth, and sickened for the love that is ideal, finds a spell more attractive to his steps, more fraught with contemplation to his spirit, than aught raised by the palace of the Cæsars or the tomb of the Scipios."

Thus meditating, and softened by the late scene with Lucilla (to which his thoughts again recurred), he sauntered onward to the steep side of the bank, in

which faith and tradition have hollowed out the grotto of the goddess. He entered the silent cavern, and bathed his temples in the delicious waters of the fountain.

It was perhaps well that it was not at that moment Lucilla made to him her strange and unlooked-for confession: again and again he said to himself (as if seeking for a justification of his self-sacrifice), "Her father was not Italian, and possessed feeling and honour: let me not forget that he loved me!" In truth, the avowal of this wild girl—an avowal made indeed with the ardour, but also breathing of the innocence, the inexperience of her character—had opened to his fancy new and not undelicious prospects. He had never loved her, save with a lukewarm kindness, before that last hour; but now, in recalling her beauty, her tears, her passionate abandonment, can we wonder that he felt a strange beating at his heart, and that he indulged that dissolved and luxurious vein of tender meditation which is the prelude to all love? We must recall, too, the recollection of his own temper, so constantly yearning for the unhackneyed, the untasted; and his deep and soft order of imagination, by which he involuntarily conjured up the delight of living with one, watching one, so different from the rest of the world, and whose thoughts and passions (wild as they might be)were all devoted to him!

And in what spot were these imaginings fed and coloured? In a spot which, in the nature of its divine fascination, could be found only beneath one sky, that sky the most balmy and loving upon earth! Who could think of love within the haunt and temple of

"That Nympholepsy of some fond despair,"

and not feel that love enhanced, deepened, modulated into at once a dream and a desire?

It was long that Godolphin indulged himself in recalling the image of Lucilla; but nerved at length, and gradually, by harder, and, we may hope, better sentiments than those of a love which he could scarcely in-

dulge, without criminality on the one hand, or what must have appeared to the man of the world derogatory folly on the other, he turned his thoughts into a less voluptuous channel, and prepared, though with a reluctant step, to depart homeward. But what was his amaze, his confusion, when, on reaching the mouth of the cave, he saw within a few steps of him Lucilla herself!

She was walking alone and slowly, her eyes bent upon the ground, and did not perceive him. According to a common custom with the middle classes of Rome, her rich hair, save by a single band, was uncovered; and as her slight and exquisite form moved along the velvet sod, so beautiful a shape, and a face so rare in its character and delicate in its expression, were in harmony with the sweet superstition of the spot, and seemed almost to restore to the deserted cave and the mourning stream their living Egeria.

Godolphin stood transfixed to the earth; and Lucilla, who was walking in the direction of the grotto, did not perceive till she was almost immediately before him. She gave a faint scream as she lifted her eyes; and the first and most natural sentiment of the woman breaking forth involuntarily, she attempted to falter out her disavowal of all expectation of meeting him there:

"Indeed, indeed, I did not know—that is—I—I—" she could achieve no more.

"Is this a favourite spot with you?" siad he, with the vague embarrassment of one at a loss for words.

"Yes," said Lucilla, faintly.

And so, in truth, it was: for its vicinity to her home, the beauty of the little valley, and the interest attached to it—an interest not the less to her in that she was but imperfectly acquainted with the true legend of the Nymph and her royal lover—had made it, even from her childhood, a chosen and beloved retreat, especially in that dangerous summer time which drives the visiter from the spot, and leaves the scene, in great measure, to the solitude which befits it. Associated as the

place was with the recollections of her earlier griefs, it was thither that her first instinct made her fly from the rude contact and displeasing companionship of her relations, to give vent to the various and conflicting passions which the late scene with Godolphin had called forth.

They now stood for a few moments silent and embarrassed, till Godolphin, resolved to end a scene which he began to feel was dangerous, said, in a hurried tone,

"Farewell, my sweet pupil! farewell! May God bless you!"

He extended his hand. Lucilla seized it as if by impulse, and, conveying it suddenly to her lips, bathed it with tears.

"I feel," said this wild and unregulated girl, "I feel, from your manner, that I ought to be grateful to you; yet I scarcely know why: you confess you cannot love me, that my affection distresses you—you fly—you desert me. Ah, if you felt one particle even of friendship for me, could you do so?"

"Lucilla, what can I say? I cannot marry you."

"Do I wish it? I ask thee but to let me go with thee wherever thou goest."

"Poor child!" said Godolphin, gazing on her; "art thou not aware that thou askest thine own dishonour?"

Lucilla seemed surprised: "Is it dishonour to love? They do not think so in Italy. It is wrong for a maiden to confess it; but that thou hast forgiven me. And if to follow thee—to sit with thee—to be near thee, bring aught of evil to myself, not thee, let me incur the evil: it can be nothing compared to the agony of thy absence!"

She looked up timidly as she spoke, and saw, with a sort of terror, that his face worked with emotions which seemed to choke his answer. "If," she cried, passionately, "if I have said what pains thee—if I have asked what would give dishonour, as thou callest it, or harm to thyself, forgive me—I knew it not—and leave me. But if it were not of thyself that thou didst

speak, believe me that thou hast done me but a cruel mercy. Let me go with thee, I implore! I have no friend here: no one loves me. I hate the faces I gaze upon; I loathe the voices I hear. And, were it for nothing else, thou remindest me of him who is gone: thou art familiar to me: every look of thee breathes of my home, of my household recollections. Take me with thee, beloved stranger! or leave me to die—I will not survive thy loss!"

"You speak of your father: know you that, were I to grant what you, in your childish innocence, so unthinkingly request, he might curse me from his grave?"

"Oh God, not so! mine is the prayer—be mine the guilt, if guilt there be. But is it not unkinder in thee to desert his daughter than to protect her?"

There was a great, a terrible struggle in Godolphin's breast. "What," said he, scarcely knowing what he said, "what will the world think of you if you fly with a stranger?"

"There is no world to me but thee!"

"What will your uncle—your relations say?"

"I care not; for I shall not hear them."

"No, no, this must not be!" said Godolphin, proudly, and once more conquering himself. "Lucilla, I would give up every other dream or hope in life to feel that I might requite this devotion by passing my life with thee: to feel that I might grant what thou askest without wronging thy innocence; but—but—"

"You love me, then! You love me!" cried Lucilla, joyously, and alive to no other interpretation of his words.

Godolphin was transported beyond himself; and, clasping Lucilla in his arms, he covered her cheeks, her lips, with impassioned and burning kisses; then suddenly, as if stung by some irresistible impulse, he tore himself away and fled from the spot.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE WEAKNESS OF ALL VIRTUE SPRINGING ONLY FROM THE FEELINGS.

It was the evening before Godolphin left Rome. As he was entering his palazzo he descried in the darkness, and at a little distance, a figure wrapped in a mantle that reminded him of Lucilla; ere he could certify himself, it was gone.

On entering his rooms, he looked eagerly over the papers and notes on his table: he seemed disappointed with the result, and sat himself down in moody and discontented thought. He had written to Lucilla the day before a long, a kind, nay, a noble outpouring of his thoughts and feelings. As far as he was able, to one so simple in her experience, yet so wild in her fancy, he explained to her the nature of his struggles and his self-sacrifice. He did not disguise from her that, till the moment of her confession, he had never examined the state of his heart towards her; nor that, with that confession, a new and ardent train of sentiment had been kindled within him. He knew enough of women to be aware that the last avowal would be the sweetest consolation both to her vanity and her heart. He assured her of the promises he had received from her relations to grant her the liberty and the indulgence that her early and unrestrained habits required; and in the most delicate and respectful terms, he enclosed an order for a sum of money sufficient at any time to command the regard of those with whom she lived, or to enable her to choose, should she so desire (though he advised her not to adopt such a measure, save for the most urgent reasons), another residence. "Send me in return," he said, as he concluded, "a lock of your hair. I want nothing to remind

me of your beauty, but I want some token of the heart of whose affection I am so mournfully proud. I will wear it as a charm against the contamination of that world of which you are so happily ignorant—as a memento of one nature beyond the thought of self—as a surety that, in finding within this base and selfish quarter of earth one soul so warm, so pure as yours, I did not deceive myself, and dream. If we ever meet again, may you then have found some one happier than I am, and in his tenderness have forgotten all of me save one kind remembrance. Beautiful and dear Lucilla, adieu! If I have not given way to the luxury of being beloved by you, it is because your generous self-abandonment has awakened, within a heart too selfish to others, a real love for yourself."

To this letter Godolphin had, hour after hour, expected a reply. He received none—not even the lock of hair for which he had pressed. He was disappointed; angry with Lucilla, dissatisfied with himself. "How bitterly," thought he, "the wise Saville would smile at my folly! I have renounced the bliss of possessing this singular and beautiful being; for what? an idle and absurd scruple which she cannot even comprehend, and at which, in her friendless and forlorn state, the most starch of her dissolute countrywomen would smile as a mere and ridiculous punctilio. And, in truth, had I fled hence with her, should I not have made her throughout life happier, far happier than she will be now? Nor would she, in that happiness, have felt, like an English girl, any pang of shame. *Here* the tie would have never been regarded as a degradation; nor does she, recurring to the simple laws of nature, imagine that any one *could* so regard it. Besides, inexperienced as she is—the creature of impulse—will she not fall a victim to some more artful and less generous lover? to some one who in her innocence will see only forwardness; and who, far from protecting her as I should have done, will regard her but as the plaything of an hour, and cast her forth the moment his passion is sated? Sated! Oh bitter thought, that

the head of another should rest upon that bosom now so wholly mine! After all, I have, in vainly adopting a seeming and sounding virtue, merely renounced my own happiness to leave her to the chances of being permanently rendered unhappy, and abandoned to want, shame, destitution, by another!"

These disagreeable and regretful thoughts were in turn but weakly combated by the occasional self-congratulation that belongs to a just or generous act, and were varied by a thousand conjectures—now of anxiety, now of anger—as to the silence of Lucilla. Sometimes he thought—but the thought only glanced partially across him, and was not distinctly acknowledged—that she might seek an interview with him ere he departed; and in this hope he did not retire to rest till the dawn broke over the ruins of the mighty and breathless city. He then flung himself on a sofa without undressing, but could not sleep, save in short and broken intervals.

The next day he put off his departure till noon, still in the hope of hearing from Lucilla, but in vain. He could not flatter himself with the hope that Lucilla did not know the exact time for his journey; he had expressly stated it. Sometimes he conceived the notion of seeking her again; but he knew too well the weakness of his generous resolution; and, though infirm of thought, was yet virtuous enough in act not to hazard it to certain defeat. At length, in a momentary desperation, and muttering reproaches on Lucilla for her fickleness and inability to appreciate the magnanimity of his conduct, he threw himself into his carriage and bade adieu to Rome.

As every grove that the traveller passes on that road was guarded once by a nymph, so now it is hallowed by a memory. In vain the air, heavy with death, creeps over the wood, the rivulet, and the shattered tower—the mind will not recur to the risk of its ignoble tenement; it flies back—it is with the Past! A subtle and speechless rapture fills and exalts the spirit. There—far to the West—spreads that purple sea,

haunted by a million reminiscences of glory; there the mountains, with their sharp and snowy crests, rise into the bosom of the heavens; on that plain the pilgrim yet hails the traditional tomb of the Curiatii and those immortal twins who left to their brother the glory of conquest and the shame by which it was succeeded: around the Lake of Nemi yet bloom the sacred groves by which Diana raised Hippolytus again into life. Poetry, Fable, History, watch over the land: it is a sepulchre; Death is within and around it; Decay writes defeature upon every stone; but the Past sits by the tomb as a mourning angel—a soul breathes through the desolation—a voice calls amid the silence. Every age that hath passed away hath left a ghost behind it; and the beautiful land seems like that imagined clime beneath the earth, in which man, glorious though it be, may not breathe and live, but which is populous with holy phantoms and illustrious shades.

On, on sped Godolphin. Night broke over him as he traversed the Pontine Marshes. There the malaria broods over its rankest venom: solitude hath lost the soul that belonged to it: all life, save the deadly fertility of corruption, seems to have rotted away: the spirit falls stricken into gloom—a nightmare weighs upon the breast of Nature—and over the wrecks of Time, Silence sits motionless in the arms of Death.

He arrived at Terracina and retired to rest. His sleep was filled with fearful dreams: he woke, late at noon, languid and dejected. As his servant, who had lived with him some years, attended him in rising, Godolphin observed on his countenance that expression common to persons of his class when they have something which they wish to communicate, and are watching their opportunity.

"Well, Malden!" said he, "you look important this morning: what has happened?"

"E—hem! Did not you observe, sir, a carriage behind us as we crossed the marshes? Sometimes you might just see it at a distance, in the moonlight."

"How the deuse should I, being within the carriage,

see behind me? No; I know nothing of the carriage: what of it?"

"A person arrived in it, sir, a little after you—would not retire to bed—and waits you in your sitting-room."

"A *person!* What person?"

"A lady, sir—a *young* lady," said the servant, suppressing a smile.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Godolphin: "leave me." The valet obeyed.

Godolphin, not for a moment doubting that it was Lucilla who had thus followed him, was struck to the heart by this proof of her resolute and reckless attachment. In any other woman, so bold a measure would, it is true, have revolted his fastidious and somewhat English taste. But in Lucilla, all that might have seemed immodest arose, in reality, from that pure and spotless ignorance which, of all species of modesty, is the most enchanting, the most dangerous to its possessor. The daughter of loneliness and seclusion—estranged wholly from all familiar or female intercourse—rather bewildered than in any way enlightened by the few books of poetry or the lighter letters she had by accident read—the sense of impropriety was in her so vague a sentiment, that every impulse of her wild and impassioned character effaced and swept it away. Ignorant of what is due to the reserve of the sex, and even of the opinions of the world—lax as the Italian world is on matters of love—she only saw occasion to glory in her tenderness, her devotion, to one so elevated in her fancy as the English stranger. Nor did there, however unconsciously to herself, mingle a single more derogatory or less pure emotion with her fanatical worship.

For my own part, I think that few men understand the real nature of a girl's love. Arising so vividly as it does from the imagination, nothing that the mind of the libertine would impute to it ever (or at least in most rare instances) sullies its weakness or debases its folly. I do not say the love is better for being thus solely the creature of imagination: I say only, so it is in ninety-

nine out of a hundred instances of girlish infatuation. In later life it is different: in the experienced woman, forwardness is always depravity.

With trembling steps and palpitating heart Godolphin sought the apartment in which he expected to find Lucilla. There, in one corner of the room, her face covered with her mantle, he beheld her: he hastened to that spot—he threw himself on his knees before her—with a timid hand he removed the covering from her face—and through tears, and paleness, and agitation, his heart was touched to the quick by its soft and loving expression.

"Wilt thou forgive me?" she faltered. "It was thine own letter that brought me hither. Now leave me if thou canst!"

"Never, never!" cried Godolphin, clasping her to his heart. "It is fated, and I resist no more. Love, tend, cherish thee, I will to my last hour. I will be all to thee that human ties can afford—father, brother, lover—all but—" He paused: "all but husband," whispered his conscience, but he silenced its voice.

"I may go with thee!" said Lucilla, in wild ecstasy: that was *her* only thought.

As, when the notion of escape occurs to the insane, their insanity appears to cease; courage, prudence, caution, invention (faculties which they knew not in sounder health), flash upon and support them as by an inspiration; so a new genius had seemed breathed into Lucilla by the idea of rejoining Godolphin. She imagined—not without justice—that, could she throw in the way of her return home an obstacle of that worldly nature which he seemed to dread she should encounter, his chief reason for resisting her attachment would be removed. Encouraged by this thought, and more than ever transported by her love since he had expressed a congenial sentiment—excited into emulation by the generous tone of his letter, and softened into yet deeper weakness by its tenderness—she had resolved upon the bold step she adopted. A *vetturino* lived near the gate of St. Sebastian: she had sought him; and at the

sight of the money which Godolphin had sent her, the *vetturino* willingly agreed to transport her to whatever point on the road to Naples she might desire; nay, even to keep pace with the more rapid method of travelling which Godolphin pursued. Early on the morning of his departure she had sought her station within sight of Godolphin's palazzo; and, ten minutes after his departure, the *vetturino* bore her, delighted but trembling, on the same road. The Italians are ordinarily good-natured, especially when they are paid for it; and courteous to females, especially if they have any suspicion of the influence of the *belle passion*. The *vetturino's* foresight had supplied the deficiencies of her inexperience: he had reminded her of the necessity of procuring her passport; and he undertook that all other difficulties should solely devolve on him. And thus Lucilla was now under the same roof with one for whom, indeed, she was unaware of the sacrifice she made; but whom, despite of all that clouded and separated their after lot, she loved to the last, with a love as reckless and strong as then—a love passing the love of woman, and defying the common ordinances of time. * * * * * * *

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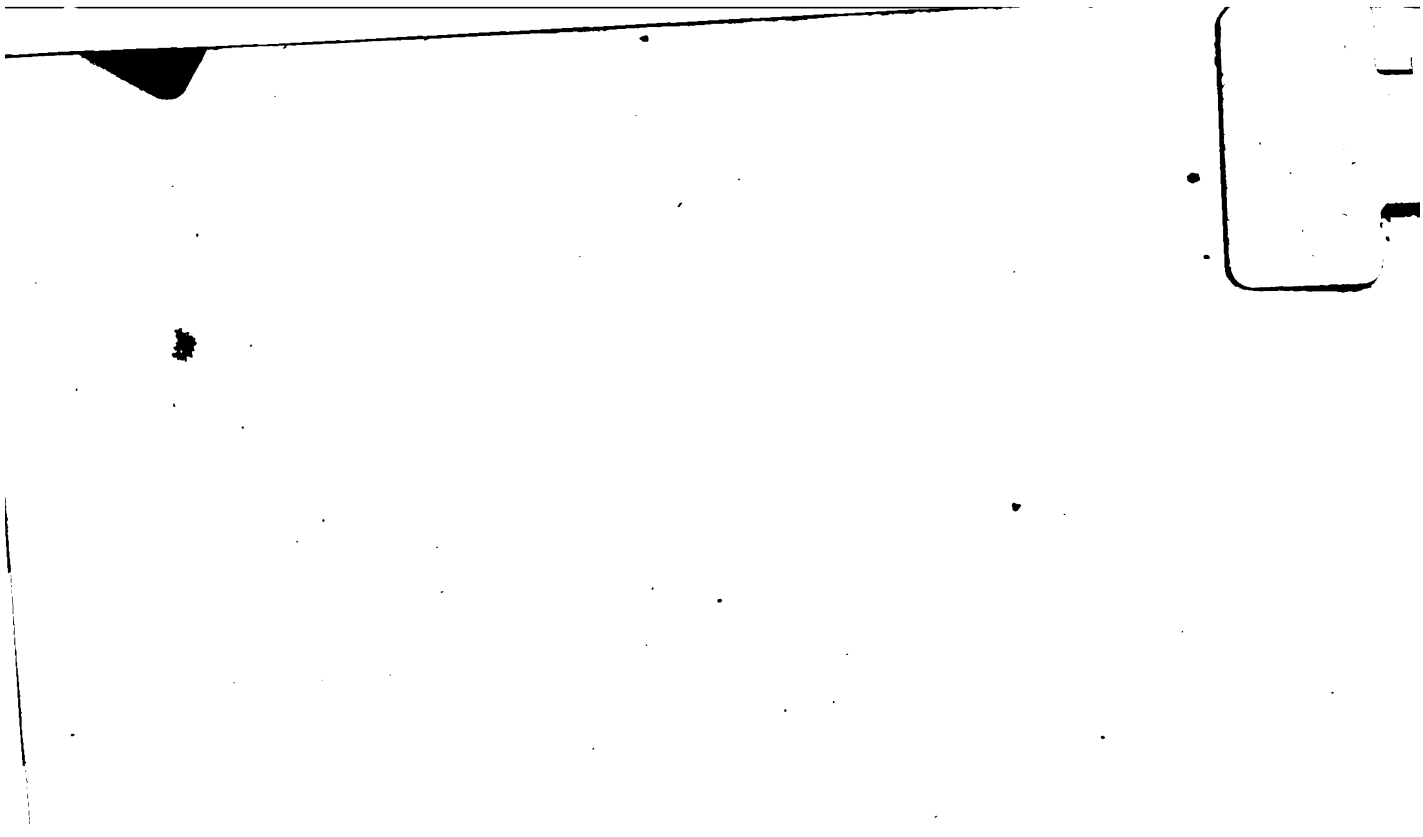
On the blue waters that break with a deep and far voice along the rocks of that delicious shore, above which the mountain that rises behind Terracina scatters to the air the odours of the citron and the orange—on that sounding and immemorial sea, the stars, like the hopes of a brighter world upon the darkness and unrest of life, shone down with a solemn but tender light. On that shore stood Lucilla and he—the wandering stranger—in whom she had hoarded the peace and the hopes of earth. Hers was the first and purple flush of the love which has attained its object; that sweet and quiet fulness of content—that heavenly, all-subduing and subdued delight, with which the heart slumbers in the excess of its own rapture. Care—the forethought of change—even the shadowy and vague mournfulness of passion—are felt not in those voluptu-

ous but tranquil moments. Like the waters that rolled, deep and eloquent, before her, every feeling within was but the mirror of an all-gentle and cloudless heaven. Her head half declined upon the breast of her young lover; she caught the beating of his heart, and in it heard all the sounds of what was now become to her the world.

And still and solitary deepened around them the mystic and lovely night. How divine was that sense and consciousness of solitude! how, as it thrilled within them, they clung closer to each other! Theirs, as yet, was that blissful and unsated time, when the touch of their hands, clasped together, was in itself a happiness of emotion too deep for words. And ever, as his eyes sought hers, the tears which the sensitiveness of her frame, the very luxury of her overflowing heart, called forth, glittered in the tranquil stars a moment and were kissed away. "Do not look up to heaven, my love," whispered Godolphin, "lest thou shouldst think of any world but this!"

Poor Lucilla! will any one who idly glances over this page sympathize one moment with the springs of thy brief joys and thy bitter sorrow? The page on which, in stamping a record of thee, I would fain retain thy memory from oblivion; that page is an emblem of thyself: a short existence, confounded with the herd to which it has no resemblance, and then, amid the rush and tumult of the world, forgotten and cast away for ever!

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